

EXPLAINING COEXISTENCE AND CONFLICT  
IN EASTERN ANATOLIA, 1800-1878

by

Brad Ronald Dennis

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of  
The University of Utah  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of History

The University of Utah

December 2015

Copyright © Brad Ronald Dennis 2015

All Rights Reserved

# The University of Utah Graduate School

## STATEMENT OF DISSERTATION APPROVAL

The dissertation of Brad Ronald Dennis  
has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

<u>Peter John Sluglett</u>	, Chair	<u>06/11/2015</u> Date Approved
<u>Peter Von Sivers</u>	, Member	<u>05/20/2015</u> Date Approved
<u>M. Hakan Yavuz</u>	, Member	<u>05/20/2015</u> Date Approved
<u>Leonard C. Chiarelli</u>	, Member	<u>05/20/2015</u> Date Approved
<u>Edward Erickson</u>	, Member	<u>05/20/2015</u> Date Approved
<u>Walter P. Reeve</u>	, Member	<u>05/20/2015</u> Date Approved

and by Isabel Moreira, Chair/Dean of

the Department/College/School of History

and by David B. Kieda, Dean of The Graduate School.

## ABSTRACT

It is a common assumption in much of the scholarship on Eastern Anatolia that groups in the region, both today and throughout the past, primarily defined and distinguished themselves in terms of their ethnicity and religious affiliations and that such distinctions were the primary causes of tension and conflict throughout history. However, an in-depth investigation of government documents, firsthand accounts, memoirs, interviews, court records, official and private investigations, and travelogues written in Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, Russian, French, German, and English reveals that tensions in Eastern Anatolia between 1800 and 1878 ran along a number of different lines besides religion and ethnicity and that groups did not appear to even imagine a conflict along such lines until the Great Powers became more involved in Ottoman politics. This study traces the major tensions and conflicts in Eastern Anatolia between 1800 and 1878 and seeks to understand what factors escalated and mitigated these. It contributes the growing body of literature that shows how groups who experienced large-scale violent ethnic and religious conflicts at different periods in history managed to coexist even amid tension before said conflicts.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
PRONUNCIATION GUIDE FOR TURKISH WORDS AND NAMES .....	vii
GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	viii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Historiography: Modernist and Structuralist Frames of Understanding .....	4
Sources .....	15
Methodology and Contributions .....	18
Layout.....	19
Chapters	
1 TOLERANCE, RESISTANCE, AND DISTRIBUTION OF POWER IN EASTERN ANATOLIA BEFORE 1829: NON-MUSLIMS .....	23
The Theoretical Basis for the Ottomans' Tolerance of Religious Diversity.....	25
<i>Realpolitik</i> and Ottoman Treatment of Non-Muslims 1500-1736 .....	30
The Relationship Between the Ottomans and the Christian Clergy in the East.....	38
Loyalty and Opposition to the Ottoman State and Iran Among the Armenian Clergy .	42
Power-Sharing Between Local Muslims and non-Muslims.....	59
Conclusion.....	63
2 EASTERN ANATOLIA 1800-1829: INTERNATIONAL WARFARE, CENTRALIZATION, AND THE POLITICS OF STABILITY .....	65
The Politics of Decentralization in Eastern Anatolia .....	66
Zones of Administrative Control over Muslim Lands .....	70
Initial Centralization Efforts in Eastern Anatolia.....	82
Waning Central Control and Political Uncertainty .....	88
Suppression of Resistance: Recapturing the East .....	91

1821-1823 Ottoman-Iranian War and its Aftermath .....	100
The 1828-1829 Russo-Ottoman War .....	107
Conclusion.....	117
 3 REFORM, CENTRALIZATION, AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF CONFLICTS IN EASTERN ANATOLIA: 1829-1847 .....	 120
Renewed Attempts at Centralization.....	121
Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia in the 1830s.....	125
Uprising in the Southeast .....	132
Hafız Paşa's Military Campaign.....	143
Bedr Khan: The Sources of His Power .....	149
Reasons for the Massacres of Assyrian Christians.....	153
The Invasion of Diz, Tişari, and Aşıta.....	171
Negotiating New Power Sharing.....	176
Further Loss of Control .....	181
Declining Power in the East .....	186
Conclusion.....	193
 4 STATE AND LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS TENSIONS, 1847-1869 .....	 198
Competing Visions over Eastern Anatolia .....	199
New Centralization: The <i>Eyalet</i> of Kurdistan .....	202
Ottoman-Christian Relations 1847-1853 .....	207
The Crimean War 1853-1856.....	212
The Revolt of Yezdan Sher .....	221
Diverse Kurdish Loyalties.....	230
Dissolution of Power Among the Kurds After the Crimean War .....	232
The Assyrians and Conflict .....	238
Postwar Transformations in the Eastern Anatolian Armenian Community.....	244
Conclusion.....	263
 5 LATENT POLARIZATION ALONG RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC LINES, 1868-1878 .....	 265
Crisis at the Head .....	266
The New Administrative Reform Effort, Cause and Effect .....	270
Relations Between the Ottoman Administration and the Locals .....	276
Continued Power Struggles.....	280
Seeking Recourse .....	286

Abuses of Armenians .....	296
Reverberations of Conflict .....	299
Dersim: A Last Frontier in Eastern Anatolia?.....	309
The Russo-Turkish War 1877-1878.....	314
Negotiating the Future.....	324
Revolt and Disorder .....	328
Conclusion.....	339
CONCLUSION.....	341
APPENDIX.....	350
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	355

## PRONUNCIATION GUIDE FOR TURKISH WORDS AND NAMES

Ç, ç: Like the “ch” sound in “chart.”

C, c: Like the “j” sound in “job.”

Ğ, ğ: Silent letter. *Ağ*a is pronounced “ah-ah” and *ağ*nam is pronounced “ah-nahm.”

İ, ı: Similar to the vowel sound of the last syllable in the word “open.”

İ, i: Like the “ih” sound in “miss.”

Ö, ö: Similar to the vowel sound in “heard” (upper-class Londoner pronunciation).

Ş, ş: Like the “sh” sound in “ship.”

Ü, ü: Similar to the French “u” sound in “une,” the German umlaut sound, and the vowel sound in “new” (upper-class Londoner pronunciation).



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ağa: Honorific title given to village heads and tribal chiefs in Kurdish society. Also spelled “agha” in citations from other texts.

Ağnam: Annual tax on sheep and goats levied by Ottoman state.

Akçe: Silver coin used as the primary monetary unit in the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Amira: Elite Armenian financier class living mostly in Western Anatolia and Thrace.

Ashkharh: Armenian word for “world,” often used to refer to the larger Armenian community.

Azg: Armenian word for “nation.”

Bab-ı Ali: See Sublime Porte.

Başıbozuk: Irregular infantrymen.

Bedel-i Askeri: Military exemption tax levied on non-Muslims.

Bey: Honorific title given to tribal chiefs.

Beylik: Political domain governed by a *bey*.

Catholicos: The ecclesiastical head of the Armenian Gregorian Church at Echmiadzin.

Cizye: A per capita tax on non-Muslims stipulated by Islamic law. Also spelled *jizya*.

Derebey: Semiautonomous leader of dynasty.

Devşirme: System of recruiting Christian boys, through both abduction and bilateral agreement with families, to serve in the military (practiced by the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries).

Dönüm: Area of land approximately the size of an English acre (with variations in size).

Emir: Commander of military force, often self-proclaimed descendant of Muhammad.

Esnaf: Merchant guilds.

Eyalet: The main administrative division in the Ottoman Empire. Similar to a province or state. Also spelled *eyâlet*.

Ferik: Major general.

Ferman: Decree issued by the sultan. Also spelled *firman*.

Gavur: Derogatory term for non-Muslims; heathen.

Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif: The reform edict decreed by the sultan in 1839.

Has: Government-owned land that produces over 100,000 *akçes*.

Hatt-ı Hümayun: The Imperial Reform Edict decreed by the Ottoman sultan in 1856.

Hoca: A teacher or moral guide; honorific title for the sultan's adviser.

Hükümet: Semiindependent governorship.

İcra-yi Zemin: Rent tax.

İmtiyaz: Formal term for a political privilege or set of privileges granted by the sultan to another inhabitant of the empire, often a local magnate.

Ishkhan: Honorific title for Armenian royalty, prince.

Istilam: Official inquiry into grievances made by certain inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire.

Jihad: Holy war.

Kadı: Judge.

Kale: Fortress.

Kapıcıbaşı: Head gatekeeper of a major fortress or imperial palace.

Kassam: Officer of law who assesses the value of land and determines shares of inheritance.

Kaymakam: Lieutenant colonel; district chief.

Kaza: Administrative subdivision of a *sancak* consisting of a large town or cluster of villages. Under the jurisdiction of a *kadı*.

Kethüda: Chief of the gatekeepers at a major fortress.

Khan: Honorific title given to powerful local magnates.

Khutba: The sermon delivered every Friday by local religious leaders in Muslim mosques, at which allegiance is often pledged to a particular political or spiritual leader.

Kışlak: Winter quarters.

Kuruş: Silver coin used as main monetary unit in the Ottoman Empire between 1687 and 1843.

Levend: Daily-wage irregular soldier.

Liva: Administrative subdivision of an *eyalet*.

Meclis: Town council.

Melik: Armenian power-holding magnate.

Millet: Confessional community within the Ottoman Empire.

Milletbaşı: Head of a *millet*.

Mir: Honorific title for power-holder in Kurdish society.

Miralay: Colonel.

Miri: State-owned land.

Mirliva: Major General.

Muavvin: High-ranking assistant.

Müdür: State-appointed governor of a *nahiye*.

Mufti: Legal authority who interprets Islamic law.

Muhafız: Guardian of a fortress.

Muhafızlık: Political domain governed by a *muhafız*.

Muhtar: Head of a village or group of villages, often informally elected by locals in the area of *muhtar*'s residence.

Müşir: Field marshal.

Mutasarrıf: Governor of a *sancak* appointed directly by the sultan.

Mutasarrıfıyya: Administrative category applied by the Ottoman administration to Lebanon 1861-1918 in recognition of its semiautonomy.

Mutasarrıflık: Political domain governed by a *mutasarrıf*.

Mütesellim: State-appointed governor of an individual town.

Nahiye: Third-level administrative subdivision consisting of a village or a town with surrounding villages. Usually a subdivision of a *kaza* or a *sancak*.

Nişan: Decorative pin awarded by the sultan to individuals for loyalty to him.

Nizam-i Cedid: The conscription-based military reforms introduced by Sultan Selim III in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Oblast: Administrative division in Russian Empire, similar to a state or province.

Öşür: Annual tax levied on between one-sixth and one-tenth of Ottoman inhabitants' proceeds.

Padişah: Superlative title for the sultan.

Paşa: Honorific title given to state-appointed political and military elites of the Ottoman Empire.

Polozhenie: A set of regulations that the Russian government put in force in 1836 that continued to allow the autonomy of the Armenian church but significantly limited the political powers of the Armenian ecclesiastic body.

Rais: Village chief.

Rayah: Peasantry.

Rüşdiye: The name for secondary schools set up during the *tanzimat* to educate adolescents.

Sancak: Administrative subdivision of an *eyalet* and later *vilayet*.

Serasker: The head commander of the Ottoman military.

Sharia: Islamic law.

Sharif: Honorific title used by Arabs for nobility class. Supposedly direct descendants of Muhammad.

Shaykh: Honorific title for tribal leader. In Ottoman Kurdish society, a *shaykh* was seen as a Muslim spiritual authority.

Sublime Porte: A term for the central government of the Ottoman Empire. Also known as *Bab-ı Ali*.

Takrir: A lengthy letter of petition or complaint, a list of grievances.

Tanzimat: A series of modernizing reforms implemented by the Sublime Porte 1839-1876.

Tapu: A permanent land lease wherein the state grants the lessee a title deed certifying his rights.

Timar: Government land grants given mostly to military officers, smaller than *zeamet* and *has* lands.

Ulema: Sunni Muslim religious scholars.

Vakıf: Religious endowment, usually consisting of land or a building, the usage of which is designated for charitable purposes.

Vali: Provincial governor of an *eyalet* or *vilayet*.

Valilik: Domain governed by a *vali*.

Vartabed: Bishop in Armenian Gregorian church.

Yaylak: Summer pasture.

Yurtluk-ocaklık: Hereditary land.

Zaptiye: Officer in the Ottoman gendarme.

Zeamet: Government land grant given mostly to military officers, larger than *timar* lands.

## INTRODUCTION

Scholarship on late Ottoman Eastern Anatolia has primarily focused on the period between 1878 and 1918. Scholarship that has looked at Eastern Anatolia during earlier periods is often done out of the hope of bolstering particular positions on the causes of conflict during the Sultan Abdülhamid II and Young Turk periods. Consequently, the 1800-1878 period is viewed selectively and retrospectively in scholarship with little consideration about the broader social fabric of the region and the factors that explain overall social cohesion and corrosion. Furthermore, studies have tended to look at factors that escalated tension and led to conflict, but have ignored factors that mitigated tensions in society and allowed for a relatively peaceful coexistence. To this day, no comprehensive study of the region during this period has been conducted in the English language.<sup>1</sup> It is the aim of this study to analyze the evolution of different relationships in Eastern Anatolia during the Sultan Mahmud II and Tanzimat periods. In so doing, this study hopes to bring out the nuances and contours of the social fabric of the region and explain how and why tension in some areas resulted in prolonged conflict and violence while in others it did not. The geographical context is the whole of Eastern Anatolia with

---

<sup>1</sup> Haik Ghazarian, *Arevmtahayeri Sotsyal Tntesakan yev Kaghakakan Katsutyune 1800-1870* [The Socioeconomic and Political Situation of the Western Armenians 1800-1870] (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Akademiayi Hratarakchutyun, 1967) is the only comprehensive work on the region that I could find. Stephan Astourian, "Testing World-system Theory, Cilicia (1830's-1890's): Armenian-Turkish Polarization and the Ideology of Modern Ottoman Historiography" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1996) covers the period extensively; however, it focuses mainly on the region of Cilicia.

special emphasis on the Armenian-, Assyrian-, and Kurdish-inhabited regions and towns surrounding Lake Van (including towns and regions such as Van, Muş, Bitlis, Beyazıt, Hakkari, Siirt, and others). For comparative purposes, some attention has also been paid to other regions of Eastern Anatolia including Diyarbakır, Erzincan, Erzurum, Zeytun, and Dersim.

Discourse on late Ottoman Eastern Anatolia since the mid-nineteenth century has been primarily concerned with questions of justice and culpability: the extent to which the Ottoman Empire justly treated its minority populations, and the extent to which it was responsible for encouraging or directing violence against them. Two major competing frames of understanding, namely the modernist (which has tended to assert that Muslim society was incapable of adapting to modernity) and structuralist (which has tended to attribute increasing conflict and tension in Ottoman society to Great Power politics), emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on this question. As these narratives have evolved, scholars have assiduously engaged themselves in an intense and competitive process of document collection. Volumes of documents have been collected and published primarily regarding the ‘Armenian question’ in the late Ottoman Empire. While these documents have greatly elucidated the complex web of relationships throughout Eastern Anatolia, they cannot, as is often wrongly assumed, speak for themselves. Moreover, many of the scholarly narratives that have been produced on the basis of these documents have often simply repeated arguments familiar from earlier first- and second-hand accounts.

Absent in scholarly discourse has been any in-depth analysis of the larger social fabric of Eastern Anatolia between 1800 and 1878. Traditional scholarship, no matter

which side of the coin it is on, has started with assumptions about culpability and justice in order to explain conflict. Yet this study asserts that it should be the other way around: that the questions of justice and culpability cannot be understood without first developing a framework for understanding the psychological, political, and socioeconomic forces that drove social interaction in Eastern Anatolia.

There is another issue that this study seeks to address, which is that scholarship on conflict in Eastern Anatolia has tended to view its history against the backdrop of the relationships between distinct ethnic groups. Armenian-Ottoman relations have tended to dominate the discourse, while a significantly smaller body of scholarship has addressed Assyrian-Ottoman, Kurdish-Ottoman, and Kurdish-Armenian relations.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on the relationships between two different groups (Ottoman-Armenian, Armenian-Kurdish, etc.) can be problematic in that in so doing, it is difficult to avoid conveying the idea that groups actually emphasized lines of ethnic and religious distinction in their discourse and behavior and that conflict continually arose along these lines. While not all studies that focus on relationships between two different ethnic and religious groups presume this, it is hard to avoid drawing out distinctions that the groups may not have found particularly

---

<sup>2</sup> Notable and relatively recent examples include Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008); Sébastien de Courtois and Vincent Aurora, *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, the Last Arameans* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004); Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables in the Ottoman State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Vahan A. Bayburdian, *Hay Krdakan Haraberutyunnere Osmanyanyan Kaysrutyunum: XIX Darum yev XX Dari Skzpin* [Kurdish Armenian Relations in the Ottoman Empire: In the Nineteenth Century and the Beginning of the Twentieth] (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1989); and Gerard Libaridian, "Ideology and History: Problems in the Study of Armeno-Kurdish Relations," in *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004): 169-181.



important themselves. This study seeks to analyze various distinctions that existed in society and the various lines along which tensions and conflicts emerged. It places primary emphasis on social and power structures and the relationships within those structures and gives a more secondary emphasis on ethnicity and religion. Highlighting the relationships between two categorically distinct ethnic and religious groups naturally leads to assumptions of ethnic and religious homogeneity and overlooks the diverse elements *within* each ethnic and religious group. Hence, scholarship on the 'Armenian question' has tended to overlook the competition and conflict *within* the Armenian *millet* during the nineteenth century. Similarly, scholarship has often assumed greater cohesion and homogeneity among Muslim groups than actually existed. Multiple social and power substructures existed within religious and ethnic groups, which need special recognition.

#### Historiography: Modernist and Structuralist Frames of Understanding

There are arguably many positions on the conflict in Eastern Anatolia, some more extreme and others more nuanced. Nonetheless by reading and comparing the literature on the region in the nineteenth century, two loosely structured frames of understanding emerge with identifiable patterns of assumptions: the modernists and the structuralists.

The modernist frame of understanding evolved from the impressions of Western missionaries and diplomats (primarily from the British Liberal Party), who visited or concerned themselves with the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century. Embedded in the modernist view is the notion that one of the prerequisites for modernity was justice, and justice meant fairness and equal rights. The group of power-holding elites in the Ottoman state was both unwilling and incapable of dealing justly with its

minority Christian populations, and could not possibly incorporate the modern foundations of justice into the system unless the political culture of the elites was abolished altogether and replaced with an entirely new, possibly Western- or British-sponsored political system.

The Ottoman *millet* system did not represent an attempt to integrate the Armenians into the state in a just and humane manner; in fact it functioned as a repressive institution designed to stem their power. In 1918 Henry Morgenthau cynically believed that the *millet* system was a way for the Ottomans to “disqualify” the Armenians and Greeks “for membership in the Ottoman state,” since the Ottomans regarded them as “vermin.”<sup>3</sup> More recently and somewhat less cynically, Libaridian maintained that the *millet* system “excluded the masses from any real participation in the Ottoman political life while sustaining the impression of the Armenian access to power.” It privileged a select few Christians, while denying rights and privileges to the vast majority.<sup>4</sup>

Modernists view the period of *tanzimat* reforms not as an Ottoman-initiated attempt to provide Christians with equal rights, but as a Western-imposed political framework that the Ottomans could never implement fully because of the opposition of Muslim masses. William Ewart Gladstone was skeptical that the *tanzimat* reforms provided any sort of relief at all for Christian populations. He argued that the massacres of Assyrians in 1843, the massacres of Maronite Christians in Lebanon in 1860, and the

---

<sup>3</sup> Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (New York: Doubleday Page and Co., 1918), 280 cited in Vahakn Dadrian, “Factors of Anger and Aggression in Genocide,” *Journal of Human Relations* 19, no. 3, (1971): 399.

<sup>4</sup> Libaridian, “The Ideology of the Armenian Liberation,” 90-102. The citation is on page 94.

massacres of Bulgarians in 1876 provided clear evidence to the contrary.<sup>5</sup> Vahakn Dadrian echoes Gladstone's cynicism towards the *tanzimat* dismissing the reforms as mere "contrivances" and "paper privileges." "The Ottoman regime...continued to alternate between its policies of oppression and repression," in spite of its nominal acceptance of reforms.<sup>6</sup>

Modernists tend to focus primarily upon violence and conflict initiated from the top downwards (sometimes referred to as state violence) and explain most collective political violence as a result of Ottoman policy. The basic motivating factor of state-sponsored violence was the political culture of the Ottoman Turkish elite, which had permeated policy for generations. This culture was based on a fusion of the religious heritage of Islam and traditional Turkish military culture and it tolerated the existence of the Christians generally as tax- and tribute-paying peasants (*rayah*). Elites of this hybrid Turkish military and Islamic culture also tolerated the Christians to hold a degree of power and wealth if they believed their subject Christians to be capable of leveraging strong outside military power against them. However, they were predisposed to massacre minorities whom they deemed rebellious. Both liberal proreform politicians and conservative Pan-Islamist politicians of the late Ottoman Empire were subsumed into the same political culture. Thus the massacres of Armenians in the 1890s under the Pan-Islamist Abdülhamid II and the massacres of 1915 under the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (which was more prone to Pan-Turkism, liberalism, and secularism),

---

<sup>5</sup> Ann Pottinger Saab, *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria, and the Working Classes, 1856-1878* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 72.

<sup>6</sup> Vahakn Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 25, 30. Dadrian's 'paper privileges' is in reference to something that Tekin Alp said.

were both evidence of the same cultural motivations. Earlier episodes of harsh treatment against the Christians were no different.<sup>7</sup>

Since the modernist view assumed that violence and conflict was mainly initiated by the state, violence initiated from below was regarded as far less significant. Many scholars of the modernist persuasion downplay the role of Armenian revolutionaries in the instigation and provocation of locals. Whatever violence may have been committed by Christians against Muslims was not a “poisonous weed,” according to Christopher Walker, but a “natural organic outgrowth from the circumstances of the Ottoman Armenians.”<sup>8</sup>

In order for the Armenians and other Christians to rid themselves of the burden of the Ottoman yoke, the transition to political modernity was necessary. Yet since the militaristic political culture of the Ottoman Turks was incompatible with modern political and justice systems,<sup>9</sup> it was believed that they would not willingly transition to modernity

---

<sup>7</sup> This argument is made very clearly by early Dashnak revolutionary writer Mikayel Varandian, in *Haykakan Sharzhman Nakhapatmutyune* [The Background of the Armenian Movement] (Geneva: Hratarakutyun H.H.D., 1912), 74, 244, and is echoed by Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of the Turko-Armenian Conflict* (New Brunswick; London: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 5-13. Neither of these authors frames this phenomenon using the term ‘political culture,’ but it is quite implicit in their arguments. Taner Akçam does, however, appeal directly to political culture in *Siyasi Kültürümüzde Zulüm ve İşkence* [Oppression and Torture in Our Political Culture] (Istanbul: İletişim Publications, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), 172. An important feature of much of the English-language scholarship is that it tends to ignore or gloss over any violence undertaken by Armenian revolutionaries. A significant portion of Armenian-language scholarship, however, is more celebratory of Armenian nationalism.

<sup>9</sup> Scholars of the modernist frame of understanding are divided over the question of whether or not this political culture permeated only elite political circles, or whether it extended deeply into lower ranking administrative circles. A sizeable group of scholars view the Armenians and Kurds as historically compatible, and consider that the political

on their own accord. Hence, outside intervention was the only way in which modernity and justice could be imposed on the Turks. Modernists regard the British policy of preserving the integrity of the Empire as nothing but a meager attempt to usher in actual justice. They mostly blamed the British for intervening in the Ottoman Empire only when economically and geopolitically convenient (taking control of Cyprus in 1878 and Egypt in 1882) but not being overly concerned for the human rights of the Armenian and Assyrian populations. After the spate of widespread violence in Eastern Anatolia in late 1895, the Duke of Argyll strongly criticized Britain for not acting more vigorously in favor of the Armenians at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and encouraged Britain to finally “come to terms with Russia and Europe” to stem the “chronic and inherent...natural...cruelties” of the Ottomans.<sup>10</sup> Richard Hovannisian makes a similar criticism of Britain: “the British,...by their insistence on the revision of the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878[,] were the most responsible for the absence of adequate guarantees for the protection of the Armenians.”<sup>11</sup>

The failure of Britain and the West to take proper action to prevent what would become the almost inevitable mass deportation and slaughter of Armenians and Assyrians in 1915 has been a subject of great lamentation in the modernist narrative, to such an extent that there is a tendency to view the history of Eastern Anatolia as the inexorable

---

culture of repression was restricted only to the Ottoman Turks. See Garo Sasuni, Hagop Shahbazian, and Gerard Libaridian.

<sup>10</sup> George John Douglas Campbell, Duke of Argyll, *Our Responsibilities for Turkey: Facts and Memories for Forty Years* (London: John Murray, 1896), 41.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Hovannisian, “The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1914,” in *The Armenian People From Ancient to Modern Times, Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 2: 220.

march of history towards 1915. Dadrian refers to the 1894-1896 massacres as “a probative effort which...may be characterized as a rehearsal for the...1915-1918 cataclysm.”<sup>12</sup> Even some scholarship related to the Assyrians has adopted this retrospective framework. Grabill argues that Western missionary penetration in southeastern Anatolia during the 1830s and 1840s encouraged the Christians to desire greater independence, and that this caused the Turks and Kurds in turn to resort to increasingly repressive measures against them. The massacres of Assyrians in 1843, he argues, were “a microcosm of the later Armenian massacres.”<sup>13</sup>

In the mid-twentieth century the structuralist frame of understanding collective political violence in Eastern Anatolia began to take shape. Much like the modernist frame of understanding, it is preoccupied with questions of justice and culpability. However, it posits that the Ottoman Empire was generally benevolent toward its minority populations and that the very existence of the *millet* system is evidence of this. When and if the Christian populations did suffer, particularly during the late Ottoman period, it was for two primary reasons: first “because their ecclesiastical leaders were given much autonomy in running the affairs of their own community, with hardly any interference from the state” and second because “expansionist and colonialist powers began to plot...[the] downfall [of the Ottoman Empire] with the connivance of some of its minorities.”<sup>14</sup>

The current structuralist frame of understanding is rooted partly in the traditional

---

<sup>12</sup> Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide*, 85.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy 1810-1927* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 137.

<sup>14</sup> Salahi Ramsdan Sonyel, *Ottoman Armenians: Victims of Great Power Diplomacy* (London: K. Rustem & Brother, 1987), 17-18.

Ottoman defense narrative, and partly in an appropriation by scholars of the Ottoman Empire of the world-systems theory developed by Immanuel Wallerstein.<sup>15</sup> The Ottoman defense narrative was propounded by Ottoman statesmen, who argued that ethnic nationalism, which was largely instigated by the Russians, drove otherwise peaceful local inhabitants to defend themselves. While the Muslims were stronger militarily, they were guarding against becoming potential victims of radical nationalist separatist Christian groups who had successfully leveraged external forces against them in the past. In an interview with Alexander Watkins Terrell, American minister plenipotentiary to the Ottoman Empire from 1893 to 1897, Sultan Abdülhamid II claimed that while Muslims in the past had been guilty of “excesses” against the Christians, they could and would not murder the Armenians on the basis of their religion alone. “Christian Europe” overplayed the murder of Christians by the hands of Muslims but “had no sympathy to bestow upon” Christians murdering Muslims. “[T]he butchery of twenty-seven thousand defenseless Turkish men, women, and children, who were massacred in one city after its surrender” during the Greek revolution of 1827 was evidence of this.<sup>16</sup> Scholars of the structuralist persuasion continue to appeal to the notion that Western observers of the Ottoman Empire were biased in their reporting and glossed over and in particular completely ignored Christian atrocities against Muslims, particularly in the Caucasus during the 1860s and Bulgaria in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Instances of ethnic cleansing of Muslims in other regions, particularly in the Balkans, were enough to justify

---

<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that the world-systems theory has had particular appeal among scholars of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>16</sup> Sultan Abdülhamid II, interview by Alexander Watkins Terrell, March 19, 1897, “An Interview with Sultan Abdul Hamid,” *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 55, no. 1 (November 1897): 136.

the anxiety of Muslims in Eastern Anatolia about the rise of militant Armenian revolutionary groups, even if the armed Armenians were small in number.<sup>17</sup>

The focal point of the Ottoman defense narrative is the characterization of violent instigation from below by Christian rebel groups.<sup>18</sup> The implicit claim of the Ottoman defense narrative is that were it not for the provocation of local Muslim groups by Christian rebels, the locals would not have reacted violently and the Ottoman state would not have needed to intervene and put down rebellion with punitive action. Collective political violence is always regarded as the fault of the Christians who were the main perpetrators while the Muslims, despite killing a greater number of Christians, were the victims. While modern sympathizers of the Ottoman defense narrative have not overtly proclaimed the Muslims as the explicit victims of Christian instigation, they have strongly upheld the notion that collective political violence was primarily the result of Christian provocation.<sup>19</sup>

Stephan Astourian and Hilmar Kaiser have produced a well-evidenced argument

---

<sup>17</sup> See for instance Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821-1922* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995). Guenter Lewy makes a similar case in *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 20-29.

<sup>18</sup> This point is made clear in the 400-page report of Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, the Ottoman Chief of Investigation (*Zaptıye Nazırı*) from June 1894 to November 1896, in which the first ninety pages are spent dwelling on the Armenian *Ermeni cem'iyât-ı fesâdiye* (terrorism) and *erbâb-ı fesad* (terrorists). *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi* [History of the Armenian Incidents] (Ankara: Osmanlı Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1998), 1-92.

<sup>19</sup> See Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 200-205; Justin McCarthy and Carolyn McCarthy, *Turks and Armenians: A Manual on the Armenian Question* (Washington DC: Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 1989), 42. Robert Melson expounds upon the 'provocation thesis' in "A Theoretical Inquiry into the Armenian Massacres of 1894-1896," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, no. 3 (July 1982): 495, 486.



that the structuralist narrative, with its provocation thesis, has implicitly invoked world-system theory to explain violence initiated from above.<sup>20</sup> World-system theory, first developed in the 1970s by Immanuel Wallerstein, holds that since the sixteenth century local economies throughout the world have gradually been incorporated into a single world economic system dominated by groups of elite capitalists. All major socioeconomic transformations since then were best explained on the level of the world system and not individual regimes. By the mid-nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire had lost most of its agency and functioned as an extension of Great Power politics. The major economic and political decisions of the sultan and Sublime Porte were influenced, if not directly guided, by the economic and political interests of Russia, Britain, and other European states.<sup>21</sup>

Structuralists assume that the Russo-Ottoman Wars during the nineteenth century decreased the Empire's control over its own future and especially that of Eastern Anatolia. Therefore, Ottoman policy toward that area is viewed more as a struggle to maintain what little control he could over the region rather than stubborn resistance to British demands for reform.<sup>22</sup> The sultan had only the tenuous allegiance of the local elites and had to maintain a "delicate balance" between their competing interests.

---

<sup>20</sup> Stephan Astourian, "Testing World-System Theory"; Hilmar Kaiser, *Imperialism, Racism, and Development Theories: The Constructing of a Dominant Paradigm on Ottoman Armenians* (Ann Arbor, MI: Gomidas Institute, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> In some ways it could be argued that world-system theory was a departure from the commonly held position by Ottoman apologists that it was the Ottomans who led the *tanzimat* reforms and not the British. However within the context of the Armenian question, much of the Ottoman defense scholarship claims loss of agency on the part of the empire.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia," *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 2 (May 1973): 141.

Immediate concessions to all British demands for reform could risk rupturing that balance and make things worse for the Christians than they already were.<sup>23</sup> It was perfectly possible for the Ottomans to establish justice for Muslims through their own efforts, and the Great Powers did not facilitate this process but disrupted it.

The modernist frame of understanding maintains a clear picture of perpetrator, the state and its feudal minions, and victim, the subalterns and religious and ethnic minorities. In contrast, the structuralist frame of understanding is more vague in its identification of perpetrator and victim. Instead it maintains a rather teleological assumption about Eastern Anatolian history, assuming that the more the Great Powers cast their hegemonic shadow over the Ottoman Empire, the more the forces of social entropy and the natural decay of society would take hold in the peripheral and territorially contested regions of the Ottoman Empire, especially Eastern Anatolia. In order to stave off the advent of a Hobbesian ‘state of nature’ in Eastern Anatolian society, the Ottoman Empire had to have its former power restored. Thus, while modernists “tend to deny agency to non-state actors”<sup>24</sup> and regard Ottoman state control as an oppressive force, structuralists deny agency to the Ottoman state, attributing the responsibility for the social burden of Eastern Anatolia to Western hegemony.

The main strength of the modernist frame is that it recognizes the hegemony of Ottoman state over its minority populations. Its main weakness is that it does not

---

<sup>23</sup> Bayram Kodaman, “Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları (II. Abdülhamid ve Doğu Aşiretleri)” [The Hamidiye Light Cavalry (Abdülhamid II and the Eastern Tribes], *Tarih Dergisi* 32, no. 1 (March 1975): 432.

<sup>24</sup> In the words of Carter Findley, “Continuity, Innovation, Synthesis, and the State,” in *Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey*, ed. Kemal Karpat (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2000), 40.

recognize the limits of that hegemony or the state's ability to impose it. It assumes that the political culture of the elites drove the state to make violent decisions and that the state controlled both the coordination and salience of collective political violence. There was no possibility of conflict resolution, and there could only be peace if and when the minority was fully subjugated. Clearly culture can influence and has influenced violent outcomes. Dov Cohen finds that "there are cultures in which violence is not an entirely deviant response, and in such cultures, one might expect that the stronger and tighter the social organization, the more culturally appropriate violence there will be."<sup>25</sup> However, the vagueness and amorphousness of the boundaries of culture make it difficult to determine the degree to which culture by itself influenced the violent act. Furthermore, the notion that different Ottoman state and local elites had identical, even similar, cultural attitudes toward ethnic minorities over time and space is hard to accept. Lastly, the implicit retrospection of the modernist frame of history, projecting the 1915 massacres into the past, does a disservice to the actual evolution of socio-historical processes in Eastern Anatolia. The history of society is best viewed in terms of diverse actors moving toward a future with various possible outcomes, not as steps leading up to a specific and preset critical juncture.

The main strength of the structuralist thesis is that it considers the resource deficiencies of the state as the principal reason for its inability to control anarchy. Its main weakness is that society devolves into disorder without strong state control. It is quick to accept the somewhat disingenuous narrative emanating from traditional Ottoman

---

<sup>25</sup> Dov Cohen, "Culture, Social Organization, and Patterns of Violence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75, no. 2 (August 1998): 408.

‘apologists’ to the effect that the Ottoman state was indeed interested in the well-being of its minority populations and that its strength was required to maintain just social order. Its inherent assumptions about violence as the natural product of social entropy are also reductionist, if not entirely incorrect. No matter what political and economic circumstances the various actors were facing, collective political violence was always a conscious and to some extent rationale, or at least rationalized, choice. As is often asserted, Kurdish tribes did not harass and kill simply because they were ‘tribal’ and thus had a gut reaction to kill when provoked. Kurdish elites in Eastern Anatolia had to weigh the costs and benefits of engaging in conflict against non-Muslims. In order to transcend these narratives, this study seeks to shift the focus on actors’ roles within power structures and patterns of interaction over time in order to explain how and why actors saw it necessary to settle their conflicts, sometimes violently, sometimes nonviolently. For it behooves us as social scientists to “shift to observation of interactions rather than the behavior of individual units,” in order to understand interactive behavior.<sup>26</sup>

### Sources

To construct a picture of nineteenth-century Eastern Anatolia, this study consults telegraphs, letters, journals, travelogues, periodicals, newspapers, and interviews which contain the words of Ottoman state officials, including the sultan, grand vizier, government ministers, *valis*, *kaymakams*, *mutasarrıfs*, *müşirs*, *kadıs*, and others of lower rank; Russian and British ambassadors, consuls, and military officials; local Kurdish,

---

<sup>26</sup> Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984), 26.

Armenian, and Assyrian elites; Armenian and Assyrian ecclesiastics; American and British missionaries in Eastern Anatolia; and Russian, American, British, Turkish, and Armenian travelers. To obtain documents with these writings, this study consulted the Başbakanlık Ottoman State Archives (abbreviated BBA in the footnotes), located in Istanbul, Turkey, published document collections which contain prints of documents from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, the Foreign Office of the British Empire, and Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (abbreviated as Matenadaran), located in Yerevan, Armenia. The Başbakanlık Ottoman State Archives contain numerous document compilations, of which this study consulted thirty-one. The compilations most used were those from 1) the Hatt-ı Hümayûn Tasnifi (the Imperial Palace Compilation, abbreviated HAT), which contains correspondence to and from the palace during the Selim III and Mahmud II periods; 2) the Mesâil-i Mühimme İrâdeleri (Decrees on Important Matters), which contains documents from the Imperial Palace and the Sublime Porte on urgent affairs; 3) the Hariciye Nezareti (the Foreign Ministry, abbreviated HR) which contains correspondence between the Sublime Porte and foreign officials; and 4) the Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi (The Registry of the Office of the Grand Vizier, abbreviated A.MKT) which contains correspondence to and from the Sublime Porte during the *tanzimat* period. This study also consults a thirteen-volume published collection of Armenian documents entitled *Divan Hayots Patmutyun* (Register of Armenian History) which contains various pieces of correspondence written in the Armenian language to and from the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul. Additionally, this study consults published document collections from the British Foreign Office and the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire. Lastly, this study references over one

hundred secondary sources written in French, Russian, Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, and German, many of which contain research that is based mostly on primary source material, and some of which include long appendices that give the primary documents in full. Most important is a number of Armenian language monographs, whose authors conducted in-depth research in the Matenadaran in Yerevan, which is difficult for scholars to access. These secondary sources contain valuable information which, although referenced in much of the Armenian language scholarship available, is seldom referenced in scholarship in other languages. This is one of the few studies on Eastern Anatolia during this period that consults documents written in Turkish, Armenian, and Russian and therefore manages to capture a wider range of views than other studies. Excluded from this study are the words of the hundreds of thousands of peasants, women, servants, slaves, and laborers most of whom were illiterate and had little means of communicating their experiences and observations beyond a small social radius. The descriptions of their experiences by others help us capture a glimpse of what their interactions with each other, Ottoman state and foreign officials, different religious and ethnic groups, and local elites may have been like. Constructing a picture of history is much like unearthing an old mosaic whose missing pieces deprive us of a full picture, but provide us enough for our imaginations to reasonably reconstruct what could have happened. In order to see the full picture, we must engage in a repeated process of stepping in closely to analyze the fine detail and stepping out to view the layout from different angles. It is hoped that the vast array of sources consulted can provide both detail and an overall picture of the different patterns of social interaction in nineteenth-century Eastern Anatolia.

### Methodology and Contributions

Eastern Anatolia during the 1800-1878 period has been studied in snippets, usually around particular issues, regions, and events. Commonly covered topics are the Bedr Khan revolt of the 1840s and his massacre of select Assyrian Christian villages, Kurdish-Ottoman relations, and Armenian-Ottoman relations. Less common topics for Eastern Anatolia during this period are Ottoman-Iranian relations, Ottoman administration of Eastern Anatolian *eyalets/vilayets*, Kurdish-Armenian relations, and Eastern Anatolia in international diplomacy. The most in-depth scholarship has been written in either Turkish or Armenian. Studies written in the Turkish language tend to be largely based on documents found in the Başbakanlık Ottoman archives, with some including documents from the British archives, and focus largely on Kurdish-Ottoman relations and the Ottoman administration of *eyalets/vilayets*. The studies written in Turkish that look at Armenian-related issues tend to rely largely very little on sources written in the Armenian language.<sup>27</sup> Studies written in the Armenian language tend to focus on Armenian-Ottoman relations and, to a lesser extent, Kurdish-Armenian relations. Armenian-language scholarship is reliant largely on Armenian sources gathered by the Armenian Patriarch and Armenian National Assembly, as well as Armenian travelogues. Many also reference documents from the British and Russian state archives. However, few, if any, reference the Ottoman archives.

It is the hope of this study to serve as a case study of interethnic and interreligious

---

<sup>27</sup> Esat Uras' work is a significant exception to this rule, although Uras' work is quite sparse on the period between 1800 and 1878. See Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi* [The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question] (Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1950).

relations and their evolution across time and space. The questions of how and why communities maintained ethnic and religious distinctions, why tensions arose and subsided, the lines along which tensions emerged, why conflict occurred in some regions but not others, and which factors escalated or mitigated conflict are as important during the nineteenth century as they are today. The aim of this study is to look at different relationships and social cleavages with the hope of providing not only a broader and more nuanced view to Eastern Anatolia, but to the study of ethnic and religious conflict on the whole. It is hoped that by shedding light on Eastern Anatolia during the period just before it was riven by a spate of violent ethnic and religious conflicts that it can serve as a model for how other scholars might attempt to analyze tensions in other multiethnic and multireligious societies, particularly the periods that preceded outbreaks of massive violence. It should be noted that ethnic, cultural, and religious difference were not always the reasons behind social tension and conflict. Instead, family feuds, state vs. local competition, international conflict, and interregional conflict and competition between elites, and even intraregional rivalries, often proved to be greater sources of tension in Eastern Anatolia than religion and ethnicity.

### Layout

Chapter 1 looks at how and why non-Muslim communities existed in Eastern Anatolia and to what extent they maintained a peaceful coexistence with Muslims, who in most cases were their overlords, during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. It traces the history of complex power relations between the Ottoman state and the Armenian community as well as those between Kurdish elites and Armenian groups. It attempts to account for how and why groups maintained ethnic and religious distinction



over a long period of time and explain where and why tensions rose between groups. It shows how the Ottoman state balanced power with the Armenian clergy and governed the larger Ottoman Armenian community through them. It identifies the areas in which Armenians maintained political and military power. Political tensions between the Ottomans and Armenians escalated largely in zones of international conflict, but did not appear to flare to any noteworthy extent elsewhere. Armenians in the western Ottoman Empire were reliant on the Ottoman state for much of their wealth and power over the Armenian community. Armenians in independent enclaves were isolated and feared being overwhelmed and losing the power privileges that the state allowed them if they tried to spread revolt.

Chapter 2 analyzes the balance of power between the Ottoman state and Muslim groups between 1700 and 1829. Its main point is that Russia's penetration of the Black Sea region in the late 1700s and the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia prompted the Ottomans to reverse their traditional decentralized policy in relation to Eastern Anatolia and undertake a calculated centralization project, which focused on strengthening control over Erzurum and restoring central control to the key garrison towns of Diyarbakır and Van. It explores the effects of the conflicts with Iran and Russia in the 1820s on the Ottomans' policy in Eastern Anatolia and how these wars altered the zeitgeist of Kurdish groups in the region. It argues that overall Ottoman-Kurdish relations deteriorated during this period because the Ottomans tried to play Kurdish elites against each other and because the Kurds often proved to be fickle allies during the conflicts with Iran and Russia. The main factor that was causing political tensions appeared to be the question of state control. Additionally, family and tribal feuds were a source of tension and conflict.

Yet, there is no evidence that tension in Eastern Anatolian society before 1829 mounted along ethnic and religious lines, as was the case in Morea and the Aegean.

In Chapter 3 it is argued that Ibrahim Paşa's incursion into Syria during the early 1830s coupled with Kōr Mehmet's rebellion spurred the Ottomans to undertake a hasty and violent centralization campaign in Eastern Anatolia during the 1830s. This was followed by a more careful and calculated campaign of centralization in the 1840s. This chapter looks into the question of Kurdish consciousness and the tradition vs. modernism debates as drivers behind the Ottoman state's conflict with largely Kurdish *beys* throughout Eastern Anatolia. It attempts to explain why conflict emerged in the area to the south of Lake Van and why it did not spread in the Kurdish regions to the north. Lastly it looks at the reasons behind the massacres of Assyrian Christians by Bedr Khan.

Chapter 4 explores the different ways in which the Ottoman state managed different tensions in Eastern Anatolia between 1847 and 1868 in the midst of competing demands by Kurdish warlords, Armenian elites, and international actors. It argues that the Ottomans made the situation worse for the Armenians by eliminating many leading figures in Kurdish society, who had historically proven crucial to managing local relations. Centralization of state power in the region reduced opportunity spaces for locals and increased competition among them. It also analyzes the power shift that occurred in Ottoman Armenian society and its overall impact on Armenians in Eastern Anatolia. Pressures from Britain to reform the Armenian *millet* made it so the Ottoman state had less control over the Armenians, which they had traditionally maintained via the *millet* structure. Consequently, this reduced the power of the Armenian patriarch and enabled the spread of political liberalism among Armenians in Eastern Anatolia.

Kurdish-Armenian relations became more unpredictable during this period, with some groups joining forces against the state and others entering into direct conflict. This chapter explains the paradox of how centralization and reform efforts engendered a quasi-anarchy in Eastern Anatolia.

Chapter 5 attempts to explain why tension generally escalated throughout Eastern Anatolia on the eve of and during the Russo-Ottoman War 1877-1878. It pinpoints the 1870s as the period in which tensions along ethnic and religious lines became the most pronounced. Its main idea is that conflict took the form of how high-ranking world administrators viewed the conflict. Since the Ottomans had defined its predominant concern in Eastern Anatolia as largely a conflict with the Kurds, a Kurdish question began to take greater shape. Since many British and Russian officials and Armenian activists viewed the liberation of Armenians from the oppression of Muslims, an Armenian question emerged. This happened in spite of the fact that tensions still existed along various different lines that were not related to ethnicity and religion.

CHAPTER 1

TOLERANCE, RESISTANCE, AND DISTRIBUTION OF  
POWER IN EASTERN ANATOLIA BEFORE  
1829: NON-MUSLIMS

The Ottomans seized control over Eastern Anatolia in the sixteenth century through a combination of the persuasion and/or cooption of local elites and sheer military force. The history of Ottoman control over the region is undoubtedly full of stories of violence, oppression, and brutality,<sup>1</sup> but it is nonetheless significant that a certain level of ethnic and religious diversity managed to exist in the region and hold some shares of power for long periods between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. What were reasons that the dominant Muslim groups tolerated non-Muslims, what were the limits of the tolerance of diversity, and to what degree did different religious groups have power either to persuade or coerce Muslims to accept their policies and actions? This chapter attempts to unpack the nature of the coexistence that existed between groups in Eastern Anatolia, explain how actors shared and balanced power, and to identify the main factors that escalated and mitigated tensions.

Scholarship on the question of Ottoman tolerance of minorities in Eastern Anatolia is fraught with generalizations and retrospective historical readings. Ottoman

---

<sup>1</sup> This, of course, is largely a mano-a-mano brutality, not the mass violence of the twentieth century.

apologists and many structuralists have often tended to convey an (over)optimistic picture of the relations between different groups in Eastern Anatolia during the Ottoman period. A commonly read argument is that ethnic and religious minorities, including the Armenians, “owed their very existence” to the Ottomans’ generally benevolent sense of order and justice, which afforded them the privileges of language, culture, and religious preservation that they would not have enjoyed under other rulers.<sup>2</sup> Strong Ottoman state control, although occasionally brutal towards actors whom they deemed threats, prevented an anarchical and often violent Hobbesian state of nature from emerging between fissiparous factions in the region.

Many modernist arguments are no less generalizing. While most modernists generally attribute the Ottomans’ maintenance of peace in the region to continuous oppression, coercion, and threats of violence, they are divided over the question of whether or not the Kurds were generally more prone to oppressing non-Muslim minority groups or more prone to collaborating with them. Some modernists assert that local Muslim groups were natural allies of the Turks by virtue of a shared traditional Islamic and military political culture.<sup>3</sup> Hence, they participated with them in expanding their domain into the predominantly Armenian inhabited territories in northeastern Anatolia and in extracting extortionate taxes and rents from them.<sup>4</sup> Other modernist narratives have stressed the distinction between tribal Kurds, who acted as collaborators with the

---

<sup>2</sup> Mehmet Hocaoglu, *Arşiv Vesikalarıyla Tarihte Ermeni Mezâlimi ve Ermeniler* [Armenians and Armenian Atrocities in History with Archival Documents] (Ankara: ER-TU Press, 1976), 51.

<sup>3</sup> Mikayel Varandian, *Haykakan Sharzhman Nakhapatmutyun* [The Early History of the Armenian Movement] (Geneva: Hratarakutyun HHD, 1912), 1: 70-87

<sup>4</sup> See Walker, *Armenia*, 86.

Ottoman Empire and as oppressive rent-seekers, and the Kurdish peasantry with whom the non-Muslim population often had better relations, in spite of periodic mutual tensions.<sup>5</sup> This narrative has tended to stress instances of Kurdish-Armenian collaboration and peace and downplay instances of Kurdish-initiated violence.

The rationale behind Ottoman policy toward Christians and Jews was based partly on a solid Islamic legal tradition upon which the Ottomans gradually elaborated, but mostly on *realpolitik* considerations. The Ottomans clearly did have a philosophical basis upon which they based their treatment towards non-Muslims that set them apart from other empires. However, consideration of the unique sets of political circumstances that the Ottomans created help to explain what was often inconsistent policy towards both its non-Muslim and Muslim subjects.

#### The Theoretical Basis for the Ottomans' Tolerance of Religious Diversity

William Kymlicka makes a compelling case that the Ottomans' policy towards their Christian and Jewish populations was based on the principle of tolerance but not on the "principle of freedom of conscience." The Ottomans did not protect the *individual* liberties of the Christians, but generally protected their group rights.<sup>6</sup> The Ottomans were

---

<sup>5</sup> See Tessa Hofmann and Gerayer Koutcharian, "The History of Armenian-Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire," *Armenian Review* 39, no. 4-156 (Winter, 1986): 4-7; Garo Sasuni, *Kurt Azkayin Sharzhumnere yev Hay-Krtagan Haraperutyunnere* [The Kurdish Nationalist Movements and Armenian-Kurdish Relations] (Beirut: Dbaran Hamazkayin, 1969). It should be noted that Sasuni wrote his book piecemeal during the early 1930s when many of the Dashnaks sought an Armenian-Kurdish partnership in order to persuade the Kurds to rise up against the Turks and help the Armenians reclaim the territories that they had lost in Eastern Anatolia during WWI. It conveys a strong nationalistic sentiment.

<sup>6</sup> William Kymlicka, "Two Models of Pluralism and Tolerance," *Analyse & Kritik* 13 (1992): 33-56.

not a model of justice in a Rawlsian sense of “justice as fair individual treatment,” but as Christopher Walker points out, they were “morally ahead of anything to come out of Europe at the time.”<sup>7</sup> This view, of course, is debatable.

When the Ottomans rose to power, they relied on Sunni religious scholars (*ulema*), mostly from the Hanafi *madhhab*, to provide the theoretical foundations upon which to shape its policy toward its non-Muslim subjects. These *ulema* already provided a crucial link between the Ottoman military elites and different Muslim populations throughout Anatolia. It is only logical that the Ottomans would use them to advise on legal and juridical matters. According to the legal theory advanced by the *ulema*, laws relating to personal status were to be based upon religious affiliation. Christians and Jews were to be afforded contracts of protection, known in Arabic legal terminology as *dhimma*, by the sultan. These contracts entitled the *dhimmis* (the Arabic term for Christians and Jews) to the physical and legal protection of the sultan and/or caliph from internal and external forces and the freedom to practice their religions on the condition that they pay (*jizya*) tribute to the sultan and/or caliph and pledge political allegiance to him.

The *dhimmi* system had great appeal to the Ottomans because of its financial advantages, but it also coincided well with their policy of “offensive *realpolitik*,” which they engaged in from the early sixteenth century until the mid-seventeenth century. The objective of this policy was to strengthen and expand the military, defend against external threats by absorbing the minorities in a diffuse, albeit loose, manner, under the

---

<sup>7</sup> Walker, *Armenia*, 87.

imperial aegis, and “maximize power by acquiring territory, population, and wealth.”<sup>8</sup>

The Ottomans relied upon the populations that they absorbed into their political system as source of wealth to finance their expensive military. Hence, it was not in their best interest to do them harm, or even to subjugate them in ways that limited their productivity, unless they posed a significant physical and political threat. Furthermore, since the Ottomans were expanding at a rapid pace, they had little time and few resources to try to forcibly assimilate populations to the Turkish language and culture and to the Islamic faith. Therefore, they developed a political system that could accommodate ethnic and religious diversity.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Ottomans were only beginning to come to terms with the diversity that existed among their subjects. As they expanded into regions with large Christian populations, they simply sought to forge relationships with whatever identifiable religious authorities there were among them in order to establish political order and extract regular revenue. The reasons that the Ottomans came to place power mainly in the hands of the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Gregorian elites, and not Assyrians, Jacobites, and Catholics, is that they constituted the largest Christian groups and were located in strategic and contested areas of the Empire. Yet it is unclear exactly when the Ottomans recognized them as distinct jurisdictional entities. Tradition holds that the Greeks were recognized as a separate confessional entity in 1454, the Armenians in 1461, and the Jews soon after. However, Benjamin Braude suggests that these so-called jurisdictional creations were based upon foundational myths, and that

---

<sup>8</sup> Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu, “The Evolution of the National Security Culture and the Military in Turkey,” *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (Fall, 2000): 201.



Ottoman policy towards different Christian groups was inconsistent and *ad hoc* throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and probably later as well.<sup>9</sup>

Latent legal distinctions did, however, appear early in the Ottoman Empire. By the seventeenth century, the term *taife* (an Arabic term denoting sect or denomination) was widely circulated among Ottoman officials to refer to different religious groups: the Christian *taife*, Frankish *taife*, and Jewish *taife*. Each *taife* was allowed to establish the parameters of exclusion and inclusion for their communities and devise their own sets of rules. They enjoyed the freedom to establish their own courts, schools, hospitals, and prisons and to prosecute whomever among their respective communities they pleased, but they were not entirely autonomous. The Muslim court reserved the right to ensure that the *taifes* were living up to their own sets of rules as well as the right to intervene in internal disputes within a single *taife* and disputes between *taifes*.<sup>10</sup>

By the eighteenth century the Ottomans had begun to use the term *millet* (an Arabic term for a confessional group) to refer to the different religious communities. They had used the term before then, but only with reference to Muslims living inside the Empire and Christians living outside it. It was arguably not until the early eighteenth century that the Ottomans used the term *millet* to refer to Christians and Jews living in the Empire, and it was only during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that the term was used to specify distinct Armenian and Greek jurisdictional entities.<sup>11</sup> The idea

---

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. idem. and Bernard Lewis (New York; London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), 1: 75-83.

<sup>10</sup> Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 62.

<sup>11</sup> Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 175-176. Also see Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 61.

that the *millets* were traditional historical divisions dating back to the early Ottoman Empire is an anachronism that nineteenth-century Ottoman historians appeared to have imposed on the past. This erroneous idea was perpetuated by earlier Western historians of the Ottoman Empire and continues to circulate in less well-informed modern scholarship.<sup>12</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, the Ottomans had strengthened the jurisdictional authority of the Greek and Armenian *milletbaşı*s (heads of the *millet*) at Istanbul over Christians throughout the Empire. The Greek *milletbaşı* had authority over all ethnic Greeks and Orthodox and Catholic groups in the Balkans and western Anatolia, but only until the 1860s and 1870s when the various Slavic Orthodox churches became autocephalous (that is, formally independent) from the Greek patriarchate of Istanbul. The Armenian *milletbaşı* had authority over all ethnic Armenians, Gregorian Orthodox Christians, Nestorians, Jacobites, and Armenian Catholics in the Empire. The centralization of authority in the hands of these two Christian *milletbaşı*s at Istanbul became a point of contention among many European diplomats, Catholics, and non-Armenian Christian groups who encouraged the Ottomans to create separate *millets* for them, as will be discussed in a later chapter.

---

<sup>12</sup> Most notably H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen argue that the parameters of the *millet* system were set in place in the early Ottoman period. See Hamilton Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Muslim Culture in the Near East* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 2: 207-61. For a more recent analysis, see Maurits van den Boogert, "Millets: Past and Present" in *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, ed. Anh Nga Longva and Anne Sofie Roald (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 27-46.

Realpolitik and Ottoman Treatment of  
Non-Muslims 1500-1736

The Ottomans rose to power at a time when the most significant threats it faced were from rival Muslim dynasties rather than from the Christian powers. Thus when the Ottomans took Constantinople in the mid-fifteenth century, the Byzantines had been in decline for several decades. Likewise, by the time the Ottomans first entered Eastern Anatolia under the commandship of Sultan Selim I in the early sixteenth century, the Armenian religious and political elites had already been weakened by internal divisions<sup>13</sup> and were the *de facto* subjects of other more militarily powerful Muslim groups, particularly the Kara Koyunlu and Ak Koyunlu dynasties.<sup>14</sup> By the early sixteenth century the Ottomans had singled out the Safavid dynasty, who also possessed gunpowder, as their greatest external threat.<sup>15</sup> They probably also feared internal rivalry

---

<sup>13</sup> The Armenian church has technically always been governed by a single hierarchy headed by the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, located at Sis in Cilicia from 1292 to 1441 and at Echmiadzin ever since. However, beginning in the twelfth century, some Armenian groups began establishing separate hierarchical authorities, particularly at Aghtamar in Lake Van in 1113, functioned independently of the authority of the Supreme Catholicos, although recognizing his authority. In addition between 1377 and 1432, the Armenian groups in Cilicia vied with one another, sometimes violently, for the office of Catholicos. The Armenian clergy in Van and Syunik (in the southern Caucasus) also engaged in political and physical struggle with each other over the office of Catholicos in the early fifteenth century. See Avedis K. Sanjian, *Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 29-30, 226-227. Some Armenian clergyman also claim that authority was not legitimately transferred to Echmiadzin in 1441, but was to remain at Sis, see Dickran Kouymjian, "Armenia from the Fall of the Cilician Kingdom (1375) to the Forced Emigration under Shah Abbas (1604)" in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 2: 38.

<sup>14</sup> Kouymjian notes that many of the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia during the fifteenth century relied on the protection of the Ak Koyunlu and Kara Koyunlu dynasties. Kouymjian, "Armenia from the Fall," 4-8.

<sup>15</sup> The use of gunpowder tended to strengthen the ability and resolve of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal dynasties to centralize military and administrative control. Of course, gunpowder gave them a significant military advantage over rivals without

in the Ottoman ruling family and the military more than whatever military force the Christian groups throughout Eastern Anatolia, which were small, decentralized, and lacking in military organization and technology, could muster through their own efforts.

Nonetheless, the Ottomans did attempt to take measures to prevent Armenian groups from forming power blocs centered around local potentates and clergymen and to prevent them from allying with the Persians. Despite the fact that the Ottomans had the upper hand against the Persians in the sixteenth century, the borderlands long remained highly contested and changed hands several times. During times of overall political instability, indiscriminate violence and robbery occurred both on the part of the Ottoman military, whose soldiers were incentivized to advance on promises of booty, and the local elites, who killed other villagers out of suspicion and robbed lands as a means of survival. Yerevan was frequently the center of violent conflict between the Ottomans and Persians, changing hands several times between 1514 and 1639. A testimony of the destructiveness of the military campaigns of the rival powers is that none of the oldest churches and mosques there date to before the sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Van and Tabriz also changed hands several times during the same period, experiencing like periods of violence and political chaos.<sup>17</sup>

---

gunpowder. But the need for large financial resources to purchase materials for firearms, manufacture weaponry, and train soldiers stimulated governments to acquire land, wealth, and population quickly. See Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, vol. 3 of *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

<sup>16</sup> George Bournoutian and Robert Hewsen, "Erevan," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/erevan-1>, accessed October 18, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> The Ottomans briefly occupied Tabriz in 1514, 1534, and 1548, and held it from 1585 to 1603. They occupied it for brief periods of time in 1618 and 1635. V. Minorsky and Sheila S. Blair, "Tabrīz," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition, [http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam\\_COM-1137](http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-1137), accessed October

The military was more prone to violent attacks on opponents if they resisted military advancements. During the wars with the Persians suspicions were heightened on the part of the Ottoman military, especially in regions with strong Persian contingencies. Brutality was particularly acute in Yerevan and Nakhchevan between 1553 and 1555 where the Ottoman military, according to Ottoman chronicler Ibrahim Peçevi, “despoiled prosperous [Armenian] villages seizing...possession...and slaves.”<sup>18</sup> However, if it appeared that the local inhabitants were not politically resistant to military control and were willing to pay tribute and provide the military with resources, the Ottomans were content to leave them in peace. This explains why the wealthy Armenian village of Julfa in southern Transcaucasia, the center of a large Armenian trading network, was spared during the latter half of the sixteenth century in spite of its exposed location between the Ottoman and Persian zones of control. Aslanian notes that the town “not only survived throughout the sixteenth century but even managed to prosper [probably because of] sheer luck, important political patrons, perceived neutrality as an all-Christian town, and handsome bribes paid to keep invaders at bay.”<sup>19</sup>

Many Armenians were victims of violence in Erzurum and some other parts of Eastern Anatolia in the mid-1620s when Sultan Murad IV and his forces sought to

---

28, 2013. The Safavids occupied Van briefly in 1534, 1546-1548, and 1605. C.E. Bosworth, "Wān," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd Edition, [http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam\\_COM-1336](http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-1336), accessed October 28, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Ibrahim Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi* [History of Peçevi], cited in Arshag Safrastian, ed., *Turkagan Aghpyurnere Hayasdani: Hayeri yev Antrkovkasi Myus Zhoghovrtneri Masin* [Turkish Sources on Armenia: Concerning Armenians and Other Peoples of Transcaucasia] (Yerevan: Gitutyunneri Akademiayi Hratarakchutyun, 1961), 1:33.

<sup>19</sup> Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 26

reclaim land that was lost to Shah Abbas I in the Caucasus and northern Iraq between 1603 and 1618. In 1627 Abaza Mehmet Paşa, who was appointed by the Ottomans to be *beglerbeg*<sup>20</sup> of Erzurum, was ordered to support the Ottoman military in a campaign against the Persians in the Caucasus, but he rebelled. Abaza Mehmet had rebelled against the Ottomans twice before: once in 1622, when he crushed the Ottoman Janissary corps stationed in Erzurum, whom he accused of exploiting the local Eastern Anatolian population and assassinating Sultan Osman II, and again in 1624.<sup>21</sup> He derived his power partly from local peasants, including Armenians, among whom he was popular. An Armenian monk, Vartabed Krikor of Kemah (a village near Erzurum), described Abaza Mehmet in a funeral eulogy as “an individual who loved the Christians and especially the downtrodden Armenian nation..., and was indiscriminately compassionate to the poor of every nationality.”<sup>22</sup> Because of the alliances between Armenian groups and Abaza Mehmet the Ottomans deemed many of them to be resisters and thereby justified their slaughter.<sup>23</sup>

Perceived resistance during time of war was also the most significant explanatory

---

<sup>20</sup> An administrative title for military governors of provinces. The term literally means *bey* of *beys*.

<sup>21</sup> Abaza Mehmet Paşa managed to keep his post as *beglerbeg* until 1628 by virtue of the fact that the Ottomans relied on whatever tenuous support he could lend against the Persians, and by the fact that the Ottomans could not muster enough force to oust him. Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 222-225.

<sup>22</sup> Hrand D. Andreasyan, “Abaza Mehmet Paşa,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 17, no. 22 (March 1967): 131.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Davey, *The Sultan and His Subjects* (London: Chapman Hall, 1897), 144. Davey claims that seventy thousand Armenians perished in the Erzurum *eyalet* alone. In addition Armenians perished in Bitlis, Van, and Aleppo, which were also under the control of military men loyal to Abaza Mehmet Paşa. The statistic is unsubstantiated, but is nonetheless an indication that the Ottoman army took Armenian lives in Eastern Anatolia at that time.

factor of violence against Armenians in the fighting in the Caucasus during the Ottoman-Persian war 1722-1727. Many Armenian soldiers serving in the Persian military against the Ottomans were partly responsible for the slaying of “20,000 Turks...in the Battel [*sic*] of [Tabriz]” in 1725.<sup>24</sup> In addition they were responsible for thousands more Ottoman casualties throughout Transcaucasia from 1723 to 1727.<sup>25</sup> Also during this period some of the Armenian *meliks* in Karabakh and Kapan who managed to gain *de facto* military control from the declining Safavids waged war against the Ottomans whom they feared would take away their autonomy. The Ottomans responded to Armenian resistance, brutally slaying “30,000 Armenians” in 1725 at Yerevan and thousands more in Karabakh and Kapan. They also carried thousands more into captivity,<sup>26</sup> forcing many Armenian villages in the region to convert to Islam, burning their religious books and killing the priests.<sup>27</sup>

Although there is no evidence that the Ottomans undertook widespread violence against Armenians in other parts of the Empire during the 1722-1727 war against Persia and the Transcaucasian Armenians, there is evidence of palpable fear among the Ottoman Armenians and Russian diplomats that the sultan was plotting violent reprisal against all

---

<sup>24</sup> Judasz Tadeusz Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: 1740, Reprinted in 1973, New York: ARNO Press), 2: 141. Krusinski's statistics are likely high estimates and inaccurate given the roundness of the figures and the fact that he claims that equal numbers were taken into captivity. Nonetheless they are telling of the massive bloodshed of the military engagements and the formidability of the Armenian military.

<sup>25</sup> Armen Aivazian, *The Armenian Rebellion of the 1720s and the Threat of Genocidal Reprisal* (Yerevan: Center for Policy Analysis, American University of Armenia, 1997), 20.

<sup>26</sup> Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 178. On the likely inflation of the statistics see ft. 21.

<sup>27</sup> Aivazian, *The Armenian Rebellion*, 39-40.

Armenians in the Empire. A Mekhitarist Armenian Friar wrote a note to the Armenian Abbott General in Venice claiming that Sultan Ahmet III ordered the annihilation (*pnachinch*) of the Armenian population on suspicion of their disloyalty. The Ottoman *Şeyh ül-Islam* did not agree to it. But it caused the Armenian patriarch enough anxiety to call off persecutions of Catholic Armenians lest he incur the suspicions of the sultan of an Armenian uprising occurring within the Ottoman Empire.<sup>28</sup>

Beyond the context of interdynastic conflict there is little evidence that the Ottoman military perpetrated widespread violence against Christians in Eastern Anatolia. This is not to say that the Ottoman administration and local Muslim groups did not subject Armenians in some regions to oppression, particularly in the form of heavy tax-collection. The greatest instances of Ottoman brutality against the Armenians between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries occurred almost exclusively in Transcaucasia, at various times between 1550 and 1600 and between 1722 and 1736, during times when the Armenians had the most military power. Similar incidents may also have occurred in Erzurum and Van in the early sixteenth century at a time when the regions had become the center of conflict between the Ottomans and Safavids, and during the early seventeenth century when the Ottoman military sought to oust a renegade military commander with whom many Armenians had allied.

The Ottomans did not generally seek to destroy the Christians of Eastern Anatolia, but to restructure their society so as to accommodate it within the Ottoman

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 28-29. The evidence that Aivazian has that there were threats by the Ottomans of “genocidal reprisal” against the Armenians is weak. Even if the sultan did desire to massacre Armenians in areas other than the Caucasus, his own ministers did not appear to be willing to carry his orders out. It appears that references to killing Armenians in the documents refer generally to Armenian rebels in the Caucasus.



political system. Both Selim I (1512-1520) and Süleyman I (1520-1566) sought to dissolve Armenian power blocs in Eastern Anatolia, enticing and forcing Armenians in the east to migrate west in order to populate Istanbul and form a new base of Armenian social power. The policy was successful, and by 1604 the Armenian population of Istanbul and its environs was approximately forty thousand.<sup>29</sup>

However, once the Ottomans had managed to drive the Persians from the Erzurum and Van regions in the mid-sixteenth centuries and secure some degree of control over the regions, they allowed the Armenians to return to their lands and to rebuild their collapsed economies. The most prominent example of this is the city of Erzurum that had been predominantly Armenian during the fifteenth century when it was under the control of the Ak Koyunlu dynasty. Completely destroyed in 1523, with its population scattered by Kızılbaş and Georgian troops, the Ottomans managed to rebuild the city between 1541 and 1591, establishing it as one of their main military garrisons in the east, and modestly repopulate it. An Ottoman *defter* records the population of the city in 1591 as about 600, sixty-six percent non-Muslim (probably mostly Armenians) and thirty-four percent Muslim. Also, many of the *mahalles* (living quarters) in the city and its environs were mixed Muslim and Christian.<sup>30</sup> Kouymjian describes the region around Lake Van as the “most thriving center of Armenian culture in the fifteenth century, and perhaps the sixteenth century too.” The region of Muş was well protected by local Kurdish groups “who were praised at least by the local Armenians as being

---

<sup>29</sup> Kouymjian, “Armenia from the Fall,” 2: 26.

<sup>30</sup> Ronald C. Jennings, “Urban Population in Anatolia in the Sixteenth Century: A Study of Kayseri, Karaman, Amasya, Trabzon, and Erzurum,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 1 (January, 1976): 26, 47-50.

benevolent.”<sup>31</sup>

In spite of the fighting between the Ottoman military and Abaza Mehmet Paşa in the 1620s that resulted in the death or removal of many locals, Sultan Murad IV sought to repatriate seven thousand Armenians from Istanbul to Eastern Anatolia during the 1630s in order to form a base of loyalists there and to replace the population.<sup>32</sup> When Evliya Çelebi visited the city Erzurum in 1645, he described the city as a flourishing center of trade with the third busiest customs station in the Empire after Istanbul and Izmir.<sup>33</sup>

The Ottomans do not seem to have regarded the Assyrian Christian groups in southeastern Anatolia as a major threat. By the time the Ottomans arrived in the region the Assyrians were relatively few in number compared to Muslim Kurdish groups. Several accounts of American and British missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century report that many of the Assyrian groups were rent-seeking clans with military power, particularly in the Hakkari region, which suggests that the Ottomans allowed them, like many of the Kurdish groups inhabiting geographically rugged terrain in the Ottoman domains, to enjoy a semiautonomous existence on the condition that they did not ally with the Persians.

---

<sup>31</sup> Kouymjian, “Armenia from the Fall,” 2: 25-26.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 2: 20.

<sup>33</sup> Çelebi suggests that the city was predominantly Muslim at that time, although he does not produce a direct estimate of the population. Kouymjian, “Armenia from the Fall,” 49-50.

### The Relationship Between the Ottomans and the Christian Clergy in the East

When the Ottomans first took over Eastern Anatolia in the early sixteenth century, the religious hierarchies were well-established in Armenian and Assyrian societies. These hierarchies generally functioned as a source of social cohesion among different interest groups, although sometimes privileging one group over the other. The hierarchies also often served in some cases as vehicles through which select individuals could gain access to social status, political and social power, and wealth. They were self-enforcing and took measures to ensure that their members remained loyal, ostracizing, at best, and sometimes physically harming, at worst, those who did not.

By virtue of their laws requiring the non-Muslims to pay an additional tax, the Ottomans had little interest in converting these Christian groups en masse to Islam, although they did encourage conversion where they perceived them to be posing a threat. Similarly, in view of the social and economic privileges that attachment to the religious structure could provide and also out of fear of punishment from the religious hierarchy, the Christians had little incentive to convert to Islam, even though this would have been accepted by their Muslim overlords and may have allowed them access to a different set of social privileges. Nonetheless in some instances Armenians and other eastern Christians did convert to Islam of their own will, often as a means of gaining legal protection from the Muslim courts against the persecution of high-ranking Christian elites or out of hopes of enhancing their social status in their immediate communities. For instance John-Shushdak Vartabedian, a leader of the Armenian Paulician sect which was popular among Armenians around Muş and Erzurum but which was persecuted by the Gregorian Armenian church, converted to Islam in the late 1770s hoping to escape

prosecution in the Armenian Gregorian courts.<sup>34</sup> A great number of Armenians in the Trabzon and Erzurum regions, known as Hemshin, converted to Islam towards the end of the eighteenth century in order to alleviate themselves from burdensome taxation and persecution by local Muslim *derebeys* (the title assumed by local Muslim potentates who protected the land and collected taxes). Some still practiced Christianity in secret, others assimilated completely, and some even rose to positions of local political power as *derebeys*.<sup>35</sup> Hence the Ottomans did not try to dissolve the social power that the religious hierarchies derived from their communities. Instead they attempted to harness it under their control for their own political purposes. Also, since there were many other greater potential threats from both Europe and Persia, the Ottomans hoped to obtain legitimacy from these groups and prevent them from being a source of internal opposition.

Particularly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Ottomans were either unaware of the theological divisions between the various Christian communities or simply did not consider them a threat. In an agreement with Francis I in 1534, Sultan Süleyman I recognized capitulatory rights to foreign Catholics traveling and residing in the Ottoman Empire, including the rights to establish missions in the Empire, build schools, and convert other Christians to Catholicism. They were also exempted from taxation and the stipulations of *sharia* law.<sup>36</sup> The Ottomans always tolerated conversions of Armenian Gregorians and Assyrian Christians to Catholicism and even accepted as

---

<sup>34</sup> Leon Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening: A History of the Armenian Church 1820-1860* (New York: The Armenian Missionary Association of America, 1946), 67.

<sup>35</sup> Hovann H. Simonian, "Hemshin from Islamicization to the End of the Nineteenth Century," in *Hemshin: History, Society, and Identity in the Highlands of Northeast Turkey*, ed. idem. (London: Routledge, 2007), 57, 74-75, 82.

<sup>36</sup> Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 67.

*milletbaşı* clerics that were in favor of union with the Catholic church. For instance a pro-Catholic cleric Tovma Beriatsi usurped the office of patriarch in 1658 by promising to pay ten times the regular tribute that previous Armenian clerics had paid to the sultan.<sup>37</sup>

Armenian Catholics in the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries generally appeared to enjoy “relative freedom and stability in the practice of their religion.”<sup>38</sup> Whatever violence the Ottomans perpetrated against Catholic Armenians, such as that which occurred against the Armenian Catholic community in Nakhchevan in the sixteenth century, was largely the result of military action against the Safavids rather than of any particular bias against Armenian Catholics.<sup>39</sup> However, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Ottomans seem to have begun to perceive the Catholics as more of a potential threat. Evidence of this lies in the fact that they were slow to intervene in order to prevent the Gregorian Armenian clerics from persecuting, arresting, and even killing Armenian Catholics. Furthermore the Ottomans denied the Armenian Catholics’ repeated bids for separate jurisdictional authority throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for which they often had the backing of French diplomats, until 1831, two years after they suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Russians in the 1828-1829 war.<sup>40</sup>

The Ottomans allowed the Nestorian and Jacobite Christians located mostly in Eastern Anatolia, Iraq, Cilicia, and Syria, to practice their religions freely. As they did

---

<sup>37</sup> Sanjian, *Armenian Communities in Syria*, 104.

<sup>38</sup> Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 30.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-185.

not constitute a majority of the population over any vast territorial expanse and the fact that many of them dwelled in enclaves that were difficult to access, the Ottomans did not believe them capable of leveraging significant social power against them. They appeared content to allow the Mar Shimun, the head of the Nestorian church, to administer the civil and religious affairs of the Nestorian *meliks* (local potentates) and *rayahs* (local peasantry) from his headquarters in Qodchanis (not far from the town of Hakkari) in the rugged mountains of southeastern Anatolia. Additionally Nestorian groups in the Hakkari region<sup>41</sup> and Jacobite groups<sup>42</sup> in Tur Abidin (comprising Mardin and Midyat) appeared to be largely self-sustaining both politically and militarily, and were independent of foreign rule, an indication that the Ottomans were never greatly interested in attempting to dissolve their power further than it had already dissolved by the activities of local non-Ottoman Muslim groups in the region. However, by the early nineteenth century these groups' only political and legal recourse was through the Armenian *millet* until the Ottomans created a separate Catholic Assyrian (Chaldean) *millet* in 1844<sup>43</sup> and a

---

<sup>41</sup> Numerous European travelers to the region in the 1830s and 1840s report that the Nestorians in several areas around Hakkari were armed and conducted raids on neighboring Muslim and Christian villages. See Asahel Grant, *The Nestorians, or, The Lost Tribes* (New York; London: John Murray, 1841), 188; Justin Perkins, *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia among the Nestorian Christians: With Notices of the Muhammedans* (New York: Allen, Morrill & Wardwell, 1843), 501; Henry Ross, *Letters from the East*, ed. Janet Ross (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1902), 61-62.

<sup>42</sup> Southgate reports that the Jacobites of Tur Abidin were able to fend off attacks by outsiders by "force of arms." Horatio Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia, and Mesopotamia* (London: Tilt and Bogue, 1840), 2:268. Also see Michel Chevalier, *Les Montagnards Chrétiens du Hakkâri et du Kurdistan Septentrional* [The Mountain Christians of Hakkari and of Northern Kurdistan] (Paris: Université du Sorbonne, 1985), 207.

<sup>43</sup> John Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Missions, Archaeologists, and Colonial Powers* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 59.

Jacobite *millet* in 1882.<sup>44</sup> They Ottomans also did not interfere with the spread of Catholicism in southeastern Anatolia starting in the sixteenth century. If anything, Catholicism divided the Christians against each other, thus weakening their potential to mobilize opposition against the Ottomans.<sup>45</sup>

Loyalty and Opposition to the Ottoman State  
and Iran Among the Armenian Clergy<sup>46</sup>

The history of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire reveals instances of both loyalty and opposition on the part of the clergy to the Ottoman state, sometimes even on the part of the same individual at different times. Two factors help explain these patterns of loyalty and opposition among the Christian clerics of the eastern churches.

First, the Armenian Gregorian religious institution did not function as an institution that was independent of the interests of its different constituents. Before the advent of the Ottomans, the Armenian church had long provided the structural foundation for social order among the Armenian people. It followed the Armenians wherever they went and became an agent of linguistic, religious, and cultural preservation, instilling the Armenians with a loose “national character.”<sup>47</sup> The church also played a role in binding Armenians together across broad geographical spaces and different social strata.

However, the selection process for high clerical office in the church had long involved

---

<sup>44</sup> Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations and Inter-Christian Rivalries in the Middle East: The Case of the Jacobites in an Age of Transition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 29.

<sup>45</sup> Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 55-58.

<sup>46</sup> This section will not cover the Assyrian clergymen due to the paucity of resources on them during the early and mid-Ottoman periods, and because they constituted a relatively small and politically insignificant group compared to the Armenians.

<sup>47</sup> Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria*, 29.

Armenian laymen,<sup>48</sup> including both the wealthy Armenian business class and local Armenian potentates (who came to be known by a number of different titles including *melik* and *ishkhan*).<sup>49</sup>

The interests of different business elites and potentates often clashed, sometimes even resulting in violence. Moreover, the cleavages in Armenian society were not necessarily along a business elite/potentate dichotomy as the two classes were sometimes divided among themselves. Generally speaking, Armenian power holders in Eastern Anatolia, Cilicia, and the Caucasus tended to favor Muslim rulers when they derived their power and wealth from the Muslims' political strength. Potentates who were weakened as a result of the political and military strength of the Ottomans or the Persians (such as the Armenians living under Persian rule in Transcaucasia) tended to be more prone to political opposition. There was no one geographical location where Armenian potentate groups were consistently in favor of or against Ottoman and Persian rule. However, the majority of Armenian political opposition movements between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries formed in Transcaucasia, the reasons for which will be discussed later. Likewise, business elites who derived wealth from a strong Ottoman or strong Persian economy tended to favor the state, while business elites who derived their wealth from outside sources—who usually lived abroad—tended to be more prone to political

---

<sup>48</sup> Vartan Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu 1839-1863* [The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1836: A Study of its Historical Development], trans. Zülal Kılıç (Istanbul: Aras, 2004), 33-38.

<sup>49</sup> The word *ishkhan* is an indigenous Armenian term meaning prince and *melik* is an Arabic term meaning king or prince that was incorporated into the Armenian lexicon as early as the fourteenth century to replace the older titles for princes. Robert Hewsen, "The Meliks of Eastern Armenia: A Preliminary Study," *Révue des Études Arméniens* 9 (1972): 293.



opposition against the Ottomans and Persians.

All the lay classes of Gregorian Armenians tended to revere the hierarchical structure of the Armenian Gregorian church and saw it as a source of ethno-religious legitimacy and order. Yet they were frequently in conflict over the choice of which cleric was to hold positions of religious power, since the clergy tended to act in the interests of their patrons and constituents. Hence their loyalties to the Ottoman state or lack thereof depended upon who their major Armenian backers were. The sheer competition among Armenian interest groups over power within the hierarchical religious structure significantly blunted whatever force of political opposition they might be able to muster against the Ottoman state.

The second factor that explains patterns of loyalty and opposition to the Ottoman state among Armenians was their proximity to the centers of Ottoman political power. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and arguably even in the seventeenth century, the Ottomans sought to restructure the hierarchy of power in the Armenian Gregorian church so as to make it function in tandem with state interests. They did this by gradually centering authority in the position of the Armenian patriarchate of Istanbul. In the Armenian ecclesiastical hierarchy the patriarch of Istanbul was “little more than a local bishop,” whose sociopolitical authority was purely the creation of the sultan,<sup>50</sup> but by the mid-seventeenth century his civil and religious authority over the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire had grown significantly. He had power over the Catholicos of Sis in Cilicia and the Catholicos of Aghtamar in the Van region, despite

---

<sup>50</sup> Braude, “Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System,” 1: 82.

being below them in ecclesiastical rank.<sup>51</sup> Even the supreme Catholicos of Echmiadzin, the highest ranking ecclesiastical authority in the Gregorian church, who resided there under the authority of the Persian Khanate of Yerevan 1639 to 1829 and under Russian authority from 1829 until WWI, came to need the Armenian Patriarch's stamp of approval for ecclesiastical appointments within the Ottoman Empire.<sup>52</sup> In general clerics who lived near the center of power tended to favor the state, whereas those who lived away from the center of power were more susceptible to pressure to involve themselves in waves of political opposition.

The Ottomans did not have full control over who would be appointed to the patriarchate and allowed him to be appointed by election. Yet by the mid-sixteenth century it was evident that the patriarchs of Istanbul and Jerusalem and the Catholicos of Sis and of Aghtamar could not be appointed without Ottoman confirmation.<sup>53</sup> However, the Ottoman authorities, as well as the Armenian religious authorities, often proved to be venal, granting clerical confirmations and appointments to the highest bidder. It was sometimes through such channels that individuals who secretly opposed the Ottomans managed to obtain positions of clerical power in the Empire. For instance Hovannes Tutunji of Van, a collaborator with the businessman Mahdesi Murat of Bitlis, an Armenian businessman and conspirator against the Ottoman Empire, who lived in France, was able to buy his way into the office of patriarch of Istanbul (1663-1664 and

---

<sup>51</sup> Hagop Barsoumian, "The Armenian Amira Class of Istanbul," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1980), 162; Sanjian, *Armenian Communities in Syria*, 101.

<sup>52</sup> Barsoumian, "The Armenian Amira Class of Istanbul," 162.

<sup>53</sup> Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria*, 103.

1665-1667) and of Catholicos of Aghtamar (1670-1672).<sup>54</sup> The Ottomans did sometimes forcibly remove people from the patriarchate of whom they did not, or ceased to, approve; thus in 1649, Sultan Murad IV removed Patriarch Asdvadzadur from the patriarchate, but reinstated him the following year.<sup>55</sup> In general the patriarchs at Istanbul did not side overtly with Armenian opposition movements.

Between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Armenian political opposition movements were strongest in Transcaucasia and to a lesser extent in Cilicia. Armenian political activists were long aware that they lacked the numbers and strength to raise a military force by themselves that could feasibly take on the Ottoman or Persian armies. Therefore their political strategy continually involved seeking to garner support from external political forces in Europe and Russia to help liberate the Armenians from Muslim rule.

During the sixteenth century the most notable opposition movements were headed by clerics in Echmiadzin and Sis. In 1547 Stepanos Salmastetsi, Catholicos of Echmiadzin, traveled to Europe with an Armenian delegation to meet with Pope Julius III, Emperor Charles V, and King Sigismund II of Poland to ask for their help to liberate the Armenians. He even made a pledge of union with the Catholic church, since the Pope made this a precondition for any sort of political alliance.<sup>56</sup> His successor Mikael Sebastatsi met secretly with some Armenian clerics in his hometown of Sivas to organize a mission to Venice in 1562. Catholicos Tadeos conducted a third mission to Europe in

---

<sup>54</sup> Liberidian, "Ideology of the Armenian Liberation," 51-52; Antranig Chalabian, *Armenia After the Coming of Islam* (Southfield, MI: A. Chalabian, 2002), 500.

<sup>55</sup> Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria*, 104.

<sup>56</sup> Kouymjian, "Armenia from the Fall," 2: 31.

1575. The Catholicos of Sis, who was ecclesiastically subordinate to the Catholicos of Echmiadzin, also sought the intervention of the Pope in 1575. While the Armenians had the sympathies of European kings and clergymen, these missions were to little avail.<sup>57</sup> It is unclear how much the Ottomans knew of these missions, but many Armenians feared Ottoman knowledge of their activities. For instance Mikael Sebastatsi's emissary, Abgar of Tokat in central Anatolia, delayed his return from Venice to the Ottoman Empire for fear of capture by the Ottomans, but eventually returned in 1566.<sup>58</sup>

The long political struggle between the Ottomans and insurgents in Eastern Anatolia and between Ottomans and Persians in the Caucasus between 1603 and 1639 led to the complete change of the social and political distribution of the Armenians in the region. Shah Abbas' deportation of some "one hundred thousand" people living in the Caucasus and parts of northeastern Anatolia, including Armenians, Jews, and Muslims, to other parts of Persia significantly altered socioeconomic and political life in the Transcaucasian Armenian community, incidentally preventing the Catholicos of Echmiadzin from collecting the finances needed to form delegations to Europe and the power to wield centripetal force to unite different Armenian interest groups in Transcaucasia, including merchants and *meliks*.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Libaridian, "The Ideology of the Armenian Liberation," 16-18.

<sup>58</sup> Chalabian, *Armenia After the Coming of Islam*, 494-495.

<sup>59</sup> Shah Abbas' campaign in the Caucasus was more brutal against Sunni Muslims, particularly in Nakhchevan, than against Christians, who were spared killing. He tried to deter the Ottomans from capturing and plundering Julfa, the Armenian economic base in Transcaucasia, and resettled the many Armenians in an area not far from Isfahan called New Julfa, where the Armenians resumed vigorous economic life. Aptin Khanbaghi, *The Fire, The Star, and The Cross: Minority Religions in Medieval and Early Modern Iran* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 112-113; Kouymjian, "Armenia from the Fall of the Cilician Kingdom," 20.

After the Ottomans and Persians concluded the Treaty of Zohab in 1639, which effectively ended Ottoman-Safavid hostilities until 1722 and established a fixed border line with Echmiadzin and Yerevan under Persian control, the Armenian clerical establishment was able to regain some order and social strength, but it faced increasing difficulty in forming a united bloc of political opposition against the Ottomans. Hakob Jughayetsi, Catholicos of Echmiadzin 1655-1680, spent much of his tenure trying to outbid his rival Eghiazar Aintaptsi, who was attempting to sever the patriarchates of Jerusalem and Istanbul from the jurisdictional authority of Echmiadzin, in securing recognition of supreme ecclesiastic authority from the Ottoman authorities, largely through bribes, gifts, and mediation from wealthy Armenian financiers.<sup>60</sup> However, in 1678 he collaborated secretly with local *meliks* in Transcaucasia to organize a delegation to Europe to petition the Pope to help the Armenians achieve independence from the Safavids and Ottomans. His delegation spent a considerable time in Istanbul, on the way to Europe, trying to persuade Armenians there to support his cause, but to little avail. His death in 1680 put an end to the movement. After his election as Catholicos of Echmiadzin in 1681, Eghiazar Aintaptsi also attempted to persuade the Pope to intervene, but to no avail.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> In 1664 Eghiazar Aintaptsi obtained an edict from the Grand Vizier Köprülü that “proclaimed him catholicos of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire.” He reaffirmed this in 1667 despite massive protest from high-ranking Armenian clergymen. However, Hakob Jughayetsi, upon rallying the support of the majority of Armenian clerics in the Empire, managed to persuade the Grand Vizier to recognize him as the supreme Catholicos in 1667-1668. However, when one of Jughayetsi’s appointees died in 1671, Aintaptsi convinced, through bribery and financial promises, the Grand Vizier to again recognize him as the legitimate Catholicos of Armenians in the Empire. See Sanjian, *The Armenian Community in Syria*, 104-109.

<sup>61</sup> Chalabian, *Armenia After the Coming of Islam*, 501-504.

Between 1691, the year of Aintaptsi's death, and 1736, the year when the Persians under the leadership of Nader Shah of the Afsharid dynasty regained control over Transcaucasia, *meliks* were the main Armenians involved in political activism. Israel Ori, the son of an Armenian *melik* from Zangezur in the southern Caucasus, single-handedly promoted Hakob Jughayetsi's campaign to shore up support from European religious and civic leaders in Venice, France, Prussia, Vienna, and Russia for an Armenian liberation movement in Transcaucasia and Eastern Anatolia between 1678 and 1708. Some European leaders, notably Peter the Great of Russia, expressed interest in helping him take control of Transcaucasia, but did not follow through because they were involved in other more pressing political matters at the time. Nonetheless, Ori's idea of rallying the political support of multiple foreign groups gained popularity among the *meliks* in Transcaucasia, helping bridge the political rifts between many of them. However, Nahabed I (1691-1705), the Catholicos at Echmiadzin did not support Ori's plan.<sup>62</sup>

The degree to which the Catholicos in Transcaucasia was in favor of either supporting or opposing the various Muslim governments seems to have depended largely on the extent to which he derived status and wealth from the policies of the Muslim governors. The Safavids had granted the Catholicos of Echmiadzin several privileges at various times, including the rights to collect taxes from Armenian subjects, to travel freely, and hold civil and legal authority over all Armenians throughout Safavid-held

---

<sup>62</sup> George Bournoutian, "Eastern Armenia from the Seventeenth Century to the Russian Annexation," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 2: 86-87; Libaridian, "The Ideology of the Armenian Liberation," 34-36.

domains, in order to win their loyalties. The Ottomans also attempted to curry favor with the Catholicoses of Echmiadzin, offering them “gifts and certificates of investiture.”<sup>63</sup> However, after the fall of the Safavids in 1722, and conflict arose in Transcaucasia, the economic and political future of the office of Catholicos became more uncertain. Local Muslim and non-Muslim groups, including Lezgis, Kurds, and Persians, sought to usurp church lands that had formerly been protected by the Safavids. When Peter the Great launched a military campaign against a weak and declining Safavid Persia in 1722, he was warmly welcomed by many Armenian *meliks*, some of whom had long sought his intervention. However, whatever hopes of political liberation some of them may have had were dashed when he ceded Transcaucasia to the Ottomans in 1723. This caused some leading Armenian military elites, most notably David Beg and Esayi Hasan-Jalalian, to seek a measure of unity among the Armenian *meliks* in Kapan and Karabakh, to ally with the Persians, and wage war against the invading Ottomans. The Armenian clergy were at this point divided over whether to play an activist or quietist role. Some such as Hasan-Jalalian who was Catholicos of the episcopal see of Gandzasar (located in Karabakh) and from one of the most powerful *melik* families in Karabakh, was committed to political activism. In addition, Asdvadzadur I (1715-1725), the Catholicos of Echmiadzin, corresponded secretly with Armenian rebel troops and led one of their platoons.<sup>64</sup> However, as other interest groups bet on Ottoman victory, especially the many Armenian businessmen who had made secret deals with the Ottomans during the

---

<sup>63</sup> George A. Bournoutian, *Eastern Armenia in the Last Decades of Persian Rule 1807-1828: A Political and Socioeconomic Study of the Khanate of Erevan on the Eve of the Russian Conquest* (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1982), 31.

<sup>64</sup> Aivazian, *The Armenian Rebellion*, 83, ft. 170.

conflict between 1722 and 1727, some clerics chose to follow suit and remain aloof and apolitical.<sup>65</sup>

After Nader Shah restored Transcaucasia to Persian control by 1736, new contracts were gradually formed between the Armenian church and the Persian government. Karim Khan of the Zand dynasty (1750-1779), one of Nader Shah's generals, sought to prevent rival dynasties in Iran from rising to power by dissolving the land holdings of locals and redistributing it among local loyalists. He granted the petition of Simeon Yerevantsi (Simeon I), Catholicos of Echmiadzin from 1763 to 1780, through imperial decree (*ferman*) to purchase back the lands that had been seized by khans during the political turmoil of earlier decades.<sup>66</sup> This enabled Simeon I to amass wealth at Echmiadzin and invest in a number of economic and social projects, including the establishment of a printing press and a paper mill. He commended the Persians for minimizing the opposition against him, which included banning Catholic missionaries, to whose influence he was vehemently opposed, from establishing schools and preaching in the region.<sup>67</sup>

Because of his good relations with the Persian monarchy, Simeon I was less prone to support Joseph Emin's political activities against the Persians and Ottomans. An Armenian political activist from a family of traders in Calcutta, Joseph Emin traveled throughout Russia, Transcaucasia, and Eastern Anatolia between 1761 and 1769 to try to gather support for the liberation of Armenians from Muslim rule. He openly criticized Armenian clerics in the Ottoman and Persian political domains as "wolves who pretend

---

<sup>65</sup> Libaridian, "The Ideology of the Armenian Liberation," 38.

<sup>66</sup> Bournoutian, *Eastern Armenia*, 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 31, 45, ft. 37.



outwardly to be disciples of our Saviour, but...have always been instrumental in the downfall [*sic*] of our harmless nation, and who are no better than tools in the hands of infidels.”<sup>68</sup> Although Simeon I may have initially supported Emin, at least according to Emin’s own account,<sup>69</sup> he later came out strongly against him and was the target of the criticism of Emin and others. In his autobiography Emin cites the Assyrian cleric Johannes *vartabed* who accused Simeon Yerevantsi of “fastening more strongly the chains of slavery on the Armenians and Assyrians when prince Emin was...[trying] to set those two miserable nations free.”<sup>70</sup> Notwithstanding Simeon I’s opposition to his activities, Emin managed to draw the support of a number of lower ranking, yet still influential, Armenian clergy in Karabakh, Catholicos Johannes of Gandzasar, and Muş, Archbishop Jonah (Hovnan) of Surp Garabet Monastery (St. John the Baptist Monastery).<sup>71</sup>

Simeon I’s successor Ghugas of Erzurum (Garin) (1780-1799) attempted to distribute power more evenly among Armenian clerics in the region. By the time of his death in 1799 a number of clerics with different political interests had managed to gain power. Between 1799 and 1828, when the Qajars formally ceded Yerevan to Russia, three main tendencies among clerics could be identified: advocacy of political neutrality and quietism, advocacy for Russian intervention to create a self-governing political territory for the Armenians in Transcaucasia, and advocacy of continued relations with Persia to maintain the status quo. Russia and Iran each backed different candidates for

---

<sup>68</sup> Joseph Emin, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin* (London, 1792), 298.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 272-273.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 484-485.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 298-300, 423-425.

the office of Catholicos of Echmiadzin. In 1799 the Russian-backed Hovsep Arghutiun was elected Catholicos; he had long promoted Russian intervention to decrease the power of rival *meliks* in Karabakh, Kapan, and Zangezur, and to alleviate the Armenians from the “cruel and unjust treatment” at the hand of the Persians,<sup>72</sup> but he died in 1801 and was never formally confirmed as Catholicos. His successor was the Persian-backed David Gurghanian, whom the pro-Russian Lazarian family ousted in 1807. By then the church was in severe financial straits due in large part to the factionalism among clerics.

With the election of the politically neutral Efrem of Tsoragegh as Catholicos in 1809 (who would remain in the position until 1830) some order was restored in the church and the religious establishment at Echmiadzin remained politically neutral during the political turmoil between Iran and Russia between 1809 and 1828.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless some lower ranking clerics continued to drum up support among Armenians for Russian intervention. Nerses Ashtaraketsi, a mere bishop in the Gregorian church at the time, started rallying up Armenian sympathies for a self-governing Armenian territory in 1813. His activism was most pronounced during the 1826-1828 Russo-Persian war when he called upon Armenians to fight “in the service of the holy Russian Emperor” and “shed [their] blood to its last drop.”<sup>74</sup> After Russia took Transcaucasia, however, Czar Nicholas assumed the title of ‘King of Armenia’ and brought the Armenian-inhabited territories into the Russian Empire.<sup>75</sup> Prince Paskevich accused Ashtaraketsi of attempting sedition

---

<sup>72</sup> Esat Uras, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question*, trans. Tülây Duran (Ankara: Documentary Publications, 1988), 1011.

<sup>73</sup> Bournoutian, *Eastern Armenia*, 32-34.

<sup>74</sup> Uras, *The Armenians in History*, 1016.

<sup>75</sup> Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 24.

in 1828 and had him exiled to Bessarabia. However, by 1836 the Russians had implemented the policy of *Polozheniya*, granting the Armenian Gregorian church sovereignty over its confessional community in religious and civic affairs.<sup>76</sup>

Instances of Armenian clerical political activism in Transcaucasia between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries exhibit two main themes. The first was the idea of an autonomous self-governing Armenian territory, to be created with the help of outside military power, a notion which had been in existence since the mid-sixteenth century and was promoted by clerics. Although the idea was at first centered around the principle that the Armenian clergy would govern the affairs of this autonomous territory, influential lay activists such as Israel Ori and Joseph Emin, and perhaps also the Catholicos Hovsep Arghutiun,<sup>77</sup> promoted the idea that the rights to governorship and enfranchisement should be based more on ethnicity than religion alone, an idea which many clerics found unappealing. Second, it shows that the Gregorian Armenian church could be manipulated as a vehicle of political activism. However, the phenomenon of Armenian political activism was largely unsuccessful, since the Armenians were divided into several different interest groups who often clashed, while individual clergy were beholden to different groups. Of course, the eventual seizure of Transcaucasia by the Russians was attributable less to Armenian political activism than to Russia's own geopolitical ambitions.

Armenian clerical activism was most pronounced in Transcaucasia for three

---

<sup>76</sup> Uras, *The Armenians in History*, 1017.

<sup>77</sup> Arghutiun proposed to the Catherine the Great that a "king of Armenia...be appointed by the empress herself" and that the "king...be crowned and anointed in Etchmiadzin." Uras, *The Armenians in History*, 1012.

reasons. First political and military power was more concentrated in Armenian hands there, particularly in the *melikdoms* of Kapan, Karabakh, and Zangezur, than in any other Armenian-inhabited regions. Since the *melik* families in those regions had great influence over the appointments of individuals to high-ranking offices in the Armenian church, many clerics tended to be more prone to political activism and opposition. Second, Transcaucasia experienced more political instability than other regions. The region went backwards and forwards several times between the Persians and the Ottomans between 1501 and 1736, and political power in Iran changed hands several times between dynasties between 1736 and 1828. Consequently the inhabitants of Transcaucasia, including the clergy, had a heightened political consciousness. Even the quietism of the clerics can be interpreted as more of a conscious political choice rather than an inert aloofness from politics. Third, Vagharshapat monastery at Echmiadzin, which housed the supreme Catholicos, was much more independent of state control than the Armenian patriarchate of Istanbul. The relationship between the Catholicos of Echmiadzin and the Shah of Iran was always much looser and more tenuous than that between the sultan/Sublime Porte and the Armenian patriarchs of Istanbul. Embedded within the Ottoman *millet* system was a much stronger state-subordinated hierarchy of power than the less consistent/more erratic policies of the various Persian dynasties toward non-Muslims. This was also the case in relation to Muslim clerics. The *ulema* (Muslim religious scholars) of the Ottoman Empire were much more incorporated into the state hierarchy of power than the Shi‘i *ulema* in Iran, particularly during the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>78</sup>

Armenian political activism in the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was far less pronounced than in Transcaucasia. The most politically active Armenian groups in the Ottoman Empire were located in Cilicia and Eastern Anatolia, although these groups tended not to involve the clergy, with the exception of Archbishop Jonah of the St. Garabet Monastery at Muş in the mid-eighteenth century. The main reason for the lack of clerical involvement was that the Armenian patriarch of Istanbul had a strong grip on the Armenian Gregorian religious establishment and strongly discouraged any clerical engagement in political activity that was not directly relevant to the affairs of the Armenian *millet*. Even Cilicia, where the Armenian clerics had been most politically active during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had become politically quiet by the eighteenth century, largely because the Ajapahian family paid the sultan to recognize their hereditary position as Catholicos of Sis by imperial decree between 1731 and 1865. In addition the local Muslim *derebeys* kept their political activities in check and were known to assault or kill leaders whom they suspected of disloyalty.<sup>79</sup>

Yet why were the patriarchs of Istanbul generally loyal to the Ottoman sultan, when the Catholicos of Echmiadzin was not always loyal to the Persians? The answer lies partly in the fact that the patriarchate was located in Istanbul, in close proximity to

---

<sup>78</sup> See Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'ism: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 105-146; Uriel Heyd, "The Ottoman 'Ulema and Westernization in the Time of Selim III and Mahmud II," in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, ed. Albert Habib Hourani et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 29-60.

<sup>79</sup> Sanjian, *The Armenian Community in Syria*, 232-235.

the center of Ottoman state power and at the same time very far away from any centers of Armenian physical power, such as the semimilitant Armenian groups in Transcaucasia and parts of Eastern Anatolia. But it also lies in the fact that the base of constituents involved in the selection of candidates for the patriarchal election became increasingly limited to a select group of Armenian business elites who came to be known by the title of *amira* by the mid-eighteenth century.

Groups of Armenians had long been involved in lucrative trading networks. They had also long pooled money that was loaned out to debtors. Merchants and financiers, known by the titles of *çelebis*, *hocas*, and *mahdesi*, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were sometimes involved in political activities against the Ottomans, especially those living outside the Empire. However, by the mid-eighteenth century a group of Armenian elites living in western Anatolia and Istanbul (who came to be known as the *amira* class) had become increasingly reliant on the Ottoman state system for their wealth and status. This group of Armenian elites played a very prominent role in the Ottoman economy: many of them owned and managed shipyards, weapons production facilities, trade routes, the imperial mint, architectural firms, and other industries that fueled the Ottoman economic and administrative apparatus. A number of them had managed to amass large amounts of capital by acting as bankers (*sarraf*), providing capital for and collecting interest on the Ottoman taxation system (*iltizam*), and as merchants selling commodities for cash.<sup>80</sup> Between the mid-eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth

---

<sup>80</sup> Hagop Barsoumian, "The Dual Role of the Armenian *Amira* Class Within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian *Millet* (1750-1850)," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York; London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), 1: 175.

century they managed to outbid most non-Armenian competition and phase out external influence in the politics of the Armenian *millet*. Between 1810 and 1845 they had a near monopoly of power over affairs in the Armenian *millet* and largely controlled the succession to the patriarchate of Istanbul.

By the early nineteenth century some *amiras* had gained considerable influence over political decision-making in the Ottoman Empire. For instance Harutyun Amira Bezjian, who oversaw the mint in the 1820s, convinced Sultan Mahmud II, with whom he had a close personal relationship,<sup>81</sup> to reverse an imperial edict (*ferman*) requiring Armenians to register their properties with the Ottoman ministry of *evkaf* (religious endowments).<sup>82</sup> In addition the sultan took advice on monetary policy from Bezjian, who proposed devaluing the currency by mixing silver with copper to help cover the costs of the Ottoman-Russian war 1828-1829, over his other Muslim adviser Reshid Mehmet Paşa. The sultan also provided him protection from enemies who threatened to kill him and awarded him a medal of honor.<sup>83</sup> The political power that the *amiras* had in the Ottoman state, however, was limited. Both sultans Selim III and Mahmud II had *amiras*, whom they suspected of disloyalty, killed. The most famous case occurred in 1819 when

---

<sup>81</sup> Tyutyunjian writes that Sultan Mahmud II and Harutyun Amira Bezjian would “spend hours with each other joking around” and that Bezjian would “confide [in the sultan] his secret plans.” Levon Tyutyunjian, *Harutyun Amira Bezjian yev Ir Zhamanagnere: Anor Dznenian 200-Amyagin Artin* [Harutyun Amira Bezjian and His Times: On the Anniversary of His 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday] (Cairo: Vosgedar, 1971), 26-27.

<sup>82</sup> Which would have subjected the Armenians to greater taxation; see Asdvadzadur Hovhannesiants, *Zhamanagakragan Badmutyun Surp Yerusaghemi* [Chronological History of Holy Jerusalem] (Jerusalem: I Tparani Arakelakan Atoroy Srbots Hakovbeants, 1890), 2: 449.

<sup>83</sup> Stepan Boghos Papazian, *Gensakrutyun Harutyun Bezjian: Azgayin Anzukagan Parerari* [Biography of Harutyun Bezjian: A Unique National Benefactor] (Istanbul: Dbaran Hovhannes Myuhendisian, 1864), 70-74.

Halet Efendi accused the Duzian brothers, Catholic Armenians who had control over the mint and to whom the former was deeply indebted, of embezzlement of funds, eventually leading Sultan Mahmud II to decide to confiscate their wealth and hang them.<sup>84</sup>

Power-Sharing Between Local  
Muslims and non-Muslims

Armenians living Zeytun, Müküs, Çatak, Van, Hınıs, Sasun, and Çapakçur (Bingöl); Assyrian Jacobites living in Tur Abidin (south of Mardin); and Assyrian Nestorians living Tkhouma and Tişari (in the Hakkari regions) had since the advent of the Ottomans been more or less self-governing. These groups were remnants of collapsed Christian dynasties that had existed before the Muslim conquest of Anatolia. Their relative independence can be attributed to three major factors. First, they were socially organized and their elites had extensive networks, often through the media of religion and trade. Second, they possessed remarkable survival and military skills and were able to fend off Kurdish groups from completely dominating them. The third and perhaps most important reason for their existence as semiautonomous political entities is that the Ottomans granted them semiautonomy as an incentive to remain loyal and not join local domestic or foreign opposition groups. There is no record that the Ottomans officially granted non-Muslims *hükümet*s and *yurtluk-ocaklık* lands, but they enjoyed relatively long periods of *de facto* semiautonomy from the state.

In some cases the Ottomans devolved power into the hands of Christian military elites in order to entice them to not join in the widespread Celali rebellions against the Ottoman state in the early seventeenth century. In 1626 Sultan Murad IV decreed that the

---

<sup>84</sup> Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 256-257.



Armenians in Zeytun were “to be exempted from the *haraç* tax, since they are difficult to access being located in a rugged and mountainous area, and to pay the Ayasofya treasury a yearly tax of fifteen thousand *kuruş* and their church a yearly tax of fifteen thousand *kuruş*.... No Ottoman officer is to be found in the region and no one passing by the region is to stay the night. Their freedom and beliefs are to be inviolate and they are allowed by law to govern themselves.”<sup>85</sup>

The Armenians in the Cilician enclave of Zeytun (near modern-day Saimbeyli) were arguably the largest and strongest Armenian semiautonomous group in Ottoman Empire. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they were militarily strong enough to hold out against the local Kurdish and Turcoman groups and may have expanded their control to some lower lying areas; however, not much beyond Zeytun. By 1740 the Armenian inhabitants of Zeytun were mining the mountains for metal to be able to manufacture their own guns.<sup>86</sup> Their military organization was strong enough to maintain their independence well into the nineteenth century. Such was their strength and organization that the Ottoman government even enlisted their help against a Kurdish revolt in Akçadağ, north of Zeytun, in 1849. The Zeytuntsi Armenians agreed to send a reinforcement of four hundred militants on the condition that they “not be mixed in with the Ottoman troops and that they fight independently under the command of their princes.”<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Zeytuntsi, *Zeytun Antsyalen yev Nerkayen* [Zeytun: Past and Present] (Vienna: Mkhitarian Tparan, 1903), 30-32.

<sup>86</sup> Aghassi, *Zeïtoun Depuis les Origines Jusqu'à l'Insurrection de 1895* [Zeitoun from its Beginnings until the Uprising of 1895], trans. Archag Tchobanian (Paris: Mercure de France, 1897), 66-67.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-105, citation on page 104.

Many Armenians in the Van and Muş regions managed to hold power alongside Kurdish groups throughout the eighteenth century and up until the *tanzimat* period. In the Van region, including the towns of Van and Erciş, many Armenian elites held what appear to be *de facto* hereditary rights to private property (*mülk*).<sup>88</sup> Armenian elites around Erciş were recognized by local groups as Tarkhans, a title signifying their independence and exemption from taxes.<sup>89</sup> In Van the group appointed by the Ottoman Empire to guard the Van fortress (located on the shore of Lake Van), known as the Vangüli group,<sup>90</sup> was composed of both Kurds and Armenians. There are a number of likely reasons that the Ottomans and local Muslim Kurdish groups exceptionally tolerated the participation of Armenians in joint military defense. First the Armenian Tangovian family had historically held the fortress.<sup>91</sup> Second, the Armenians had for most of the Ottoman period constituted a sizeable number in the region; a near majority in the town of Van itself as well as other nearby villages.<sup>92</sup> Third, the military might of the Armenians at Van was probably lesser than that of the Ottomans and local Muslim groups but formidable enough to wear thin assailant groups making them more vulnerable to their local rivals. For the Ottomans, the nearby Persian threat was greater than that of the Armenians at Van, and for local Kurdish groups, the threat of other rival Kurdish groups was more pressing than weakening local Armenian military strength. Kurdish groups used the Armenians to their military advantage against other rival

---

<sup>88</sup> Ghazarian, *Arevmtahayeri*, 85.

<sup>89</sup> Hagop Shahbazian, *Kyurto-Hay Badmutyun* [Kurdish-Armenian History] (Istanbul: Dbaran Araks, 1911), 71.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-74. Vangüli literally means of Lake Van.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>92</sup> Khachatur Badalyan, “Vani Nahange 1840-akan 1914 tt.” [The Province of Van from 1840 to 1914], *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 3 (1986): 13-27.

Muslim groups.

The paucity of sources makes it difficult to determine the origins of the Vangüli defense organization and its origins. According to Hampartsum Yeremian, an Armenian resident of Van in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Vangülis were gradually subsumed into the Ottoman administrative apparatus as they infiltrated Eastern Anatolia, but were allowed semiautonomous control over the fortress. Armenians held positions of military power among the Vangülis up until the *tanzimat* period. The Vangülis were often a thorn in the side of the Ottoman-appointed governor of Van, often disregarding his commands.

Yeremian writes that a select group of local Christian elites held significant power over the political and even religious affairs of the city:

Before the Tanzimat, notables of the city [of Van] were called *hojas* or *şorbans* [*sic*]<sup>93</sup> and would manage the affairs of the people of the town. Twelve elected officials...also called the *onikler* [*sic*]...<sup>94</sup> held the title of *hocabaşı*.... They were the *amiras* of the region...who would sometimes even extend their authority over a number of regional Kurds. Each prior of the monastery, and even the Catholicos of Aghtamar, was chosen by the vote of a society of village *meliks*. They would also administer the episcopate's affairs under the responsibility of the assembly. The Patriarchate of Istanbul is not able to directly oversee the affairs of the region.<sup>95</sup>

The Armenians in the Sasun region, a group of villages located in a mountainous area 50km south of Muş and 80km west of Bitlis, were nearly as strong and independent as those in Zeytun. However, unlike the Zeytuntsis, they shared power with local Kurds.

---

<sup>93</sup> In the Armenian original it is spelled շորխաւի (transliterated as *şorban*); however Yeremian likely means *çoban*, an honorary title given to pastoral chiefs.

<sup>94</sup> Here Yeremian writes օնիքլեր (transliterated as *onikler*) but really means *onikiler* which in Turkish translates as 'the twelve.'

<sup>95</sup> Hampartsum Yeramian, *Hushartsan Van-Vasburagani* [Memoirs of Van-Vaspurakan] (Alexandria: Dbakrutyun Aram Kasabian, 1929), 1: 28; Ghazarian, *Arevmtahayeri*, 57.

According to Injijian, a Mekhitarist Armenian geographer from Venice who visited Eastern Anatolia between 1800 and 1804, wrote in 1806:

The residents of [of Sasun] are both Kurds and Armenians and have a freedom one in the same. They are brave and strapping, and appear to have a body of stamina, being warrior-like and ferocious.... They are numerous, have always been self-governing, and serve no one. None of the paşas or beys are able to conquer them. They are strong against [outside] force and dwell in fortified place, they allow no access to outsiders who seek refuge. They have their own self-governing bey.<sup>96</sup>

### Conclusion

Non-Muslim groups in Eastern Anatolia were able to maintain their ethnic and religious distinction for a number of reasons: 1) Islamic doctrine bestowed a protected status upon Christians and Jews, which became the basis for Ottoman administration, 2) the Ottomans either long envisioned a multiethnic and multireligious state or simply accepted that tolerance of religious diversity was the only way to feasibly control a large expanse of territory, 3) the Ottomans did not perceive Christianity in and of itself to be a significant threat, and 4) the Armenian and Assyrian Christians had deep ethnic and religious traditions that gave them a strong sense of identity along Armenian and Assyrian lines.

In spite of the number of Armenians who envisioned and sought liberation for the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia from the Ottoman government, this never came to fruition because of power struggles within the Armenian community, the dominance of the sultan-enabled Western Ottoman Armenians over the affairs of the entire Ottoman Armenian community, and the increasing dominance of Muslim Kurdish groups

---

<sup>96</sup> Ghugas Injijian, *Ashkharhakrutyun Chorits Masants Ashkharhi* [Geography of the Four Corners of the World] (Venice: St. Lazarus, 1804), 1: 200.

throughout Eastern Anatolia. Armenians coexisted with the Ottoman state and different Muslim groups with a lingering tension. The collective memory of earlier periods of greatness gave many a deep sense of loss; however, Muslim groups had simply grown too powerful in most regions for the Armenians to do much about it. The politically conscious elite Armenians had come to accept their roles as financiers, jewelers, ecclesiastics, merchants, physicians, and a host of other nonpolitical, nonmilitary paths in the Ottoman state, and many took great pleasure in these roles. It is reasonable to believe that the Armenian peasantry, however, lived lives as second-class inhabitants of the Empire who were at the mercy of not only Muslim overlords, but also other Armenian elites for their well-being.

## CHAPTER 2

### EASTERN ANATOLIA 1800-1829: INTERNATIONAL WARFARE, CENTRALIZATION, AND THE POLITICS OF STABILITY

Before the late eighteenth century, the Ottomans had treated Eastern Anatolia largely as a buffer zone between its more economically vital regions—the Mediterranean and Black Seas and the steppes of Central Anatolia—and the Iranians, with whom they had engaged in ten wars years since 1514 with little to no long lasting territorial acquisitions. One can only speculate what may have happened had the Ottomans managed to penetrate, conquer, and hold the Zagros Mountains, the Caucasus, and beyond. The question of whether or not the sultan would have sought and managed to integrate Eastern Anatolia more fully into the Ottoman administrative apparatus or not remains a mystery. Nonetheless, it was arguably the stalemate and political tension that persisted between Iran and the Ottomans throughout the 1700s (particularly after the rise of Nader Shah in 1730) that led the Ottomans to pursue a continued policy of decentralization in Eastern Anatolia. Yet, the rising threat of Russia on its eastern flank, continued border disputes with Iran, and power disputes with increasingly powerful local elites (whose activities were disrupting the delicate balance of international power between the Ottoman Empire and its eastern neighbors) made decentralization an increasingly intolerable option for the Ottomans. Consequently, by 1800 they reluctantly

and ineffectively undertook measures to dissolve power among the local elites and implement a more central order in the region. The Ottoman struggle to centralize control over Eastern Anatolia between 1800 and 1829 was one that resulted in modest success but that came with a number of unexpected costs. The Ottoman administrators' clumsy and rash attempts to impose central order had the inverse effect of making them appear unpredictable, unreliable, and untrustworthy. As a result increasing numbers of Eastern Anatolian actors turned to local magnates and to a lesser extent foreign powers as a means of developing a lasting stability. Conflict in Eastern Anatolia during this period was centered largely around the questions of who was most capable of providing stability and the effectiveness of strong central controls more than the questions of class and ethnic and religious affiliations.

### The Politics of Decentralization in Eastern Anatolia

Three main factors explain the continued evolution of the Ottoman Empire as a decentralized state throughout the 1700s. First, the Janissary military corps had become corrupt, dysfunctional, expensive, unruly, and ineffective in combat against Russia, Austria, and Iran. On the Empire's eastern and western flanks, the Janissaries began relying increasingly on *levends*, who were generally daily-wage irregular recruits from the periphery who were often untrained and undisciplined, to fight their battles.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Levends* were frequently blamed for losses in battles. After losing a key battle in the Caucasus at Baghavad (just north of Yerevan) in 1744 to Nader Shah, Sultan Mahmud I ordered officials to completely disband the *levends* and kill all those who rebelled. See Stanford Shaw, "Iranian Relations with the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *The Cambridge History of Iran: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Peter Avery et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7: 308-309.

However, in spite of sultans' efforts to dissolve the traditional military corps, Janissary leaders refused to accept military reform. It was not until Sultan Mahmud II launched a violent attack against the Janissaries in 1826 that they were fully dissolved and replaced.

Second, the increasing Ottoman military weakness against the increasing military strength of foreign foes kept the sultan from expanding his territory and thus being able to finance a strong central administrative and military presence in peripheral regions. Austria's successful resistance against Ottoman expansion in the late seventeenth century, which culminated in Austria and other members of the Holy League forcing the Ottomans to accept the terms of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, completely halted Ottoman expansion on its western front. Consequently, the Ottomans were forced to seek expansion eastward in order to increase revenue, manpower, and access to natural resources.

The invasion of Iran by the ethnically Pushtun Mir Weis Hotak and his Ghalzai tribal forces in 1707, which culminated with their capture of the Safavid capital Isfahan in 1722,<sup>2</sup> and Peter the Great's military campaign southward in 1722 and 1723—which resulted in the military capture of Derbent and Baku and political acquisition of Astarabad, Mazandaran, and Gilan—provided both a window of opportunity and an incentive for the Ottomans to advance their forces eastward. The Ottomans experienced initial success between 1722 and 1730, managing to take control of much of the

---

<sup>2</sup> M. Longworth Dames, "Ghalzai," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed. (1913-1936), ed. M. Th. Houtsma, T.W. Arnold, R. Basset, and R. Hartmann, [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-1/ghalzai-SIM\\_2441](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-1/ghalzai-SIM_2441) (accessed October 2, 2014).



Caucasus, parts of Dagestan, and Hamedan and Kermanshah.<sup>3</sup> However, between 1730 and his death in 1747, Nader Shah managed to reverse all of the Ottomans' successes by driving them from Iran and invading their territory on two separate occasions (although he did not make any permanent gains). By 1746, the Ottomans and Nader Shah agreed to restore the border much as it was established under the Treaty of Zohab 1639. Between 1747 and 1800, Iran experienced numerous episodes of political instability. However, due to conflicts with Russia and Austria and the Ottomans' continued reliance on a decaying Janissary corps, the Ottomans were not able to exploit Iran's periodic weakness as an opportunity for military expansion.

The third main reason that the Ottoman Empire emerged as a decentralized state was that demands for power in the periphery were numerous enough and strong enough to outweigh the sultan's capability to maintain central control. As demands for autonomy from peripheral elites grew throughout the 1700s, the sultan's ability to resist those demands decreased. By the late 1700s, the sultan both tacitly and formally recognized varying degrees of autonomy for urban elites in Syria and Iraq, rival Mamluk dynasties in Egypt, the Georgian Mamluk dynasty over Basra and Baghdad, Janissary elites in Tunisia and Algeria, the Qaramanli governors in Libya, the Sharifian rulers in the Hijaz, as well as powerful families and individuals in Romania and Western and Eastern Anatolia.<sup>4</sup> While the Ottomans maintained their traditional *eyalet* administration in the provinces of Van, Diyarbakır, and Erzurum, the Ottomans relied extensively on either local elites, or

---

<sup>3</sup> Gábor Ágoston, "Iran (Islamic Republic of Iran, Persia)," *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston, Bruce Alan Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 278-282.

<sup>4</sup> See Malcom E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923* (London and New York: Longman, 1987), 99.

an appointed elite from outside the city who had amassed power among local elites, from each of these cities to govern over provincial affairs. The sultan's allowance for different groups to hold power was not necessarily a surrender to their demand, but can be best interpreted as a stopgap measure for the purpose of maintaining order. The central administration feared that hasty and rash action to remove a semiautonomous elite from power could result in a much larger destabilization that could have the dire consequence of rupturing the Ottoman Empire altogether and making their political situation akin to that of neighboring Iran throughout much of the late 1700s. Furthermore, the Ottomans tended to reserve what political and military capabilities they did have towards quelling political movements aimed at separation from the Ottoman Empire with the aid of a foreign government or movements that threatened to destabilize the balance of power in a peripheral region to the extent of leaving it vulnerable to foreign intrigues.

It is within this context of weakening Ottoman military and bureaucratic apparatuses that the rise of powerful elites in Kurdish and Armenian-inhabited areas can be best understood. While the Ottomans had long allowed Kurds in peripheral and rugged regions differing packages of privileges of semiautonomy, they attempted to limit the extent to which Kurdish elites could acquire land and followers. They strategically allotted power-holding privileges of different degrees to numerous select elites with the hope of giving them the sense, if not the illusion, of autonomy, but limiting their potential to acquire power. The Ottomans continually made a concerted effort to keep semiautonomous elites small and reliant on the state for security against family feuds, skirmishes with neighboring tribal confederations, and the intrigues of foreign governments and cross-border tribes. However, the paucity of sources on Kurdish groups

in Eastern Anatolia between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries makes it difficult to ascertain to what extent the groups were able to assert dominance over a given region.<sup>5</sup>

Privileges of semiautonomy were extended to select Armenian and Assyrian groups, such as the Armenians in Zeytun, Hınıs, Sasun, Çatak (Shadakh), the Jacobite Assyrians of Jebel Tur, and the Nestorian Assyrians of Julamerk (Hakkari). However, since these independent Christian enclaves were small and not adjacent to each other or a foreign Christian government, the Ottomans did not deem these enclaves to constitute any significant political threat.<sup>6</sup>

#### Zones of Administrative Control over Muslim Lands

Throughout most of the Ottoman period, three relatively distinct administrative zones can be identified in Eastern Anatolia: zones of central state control, zones of shared control between Ottomans and locals (or semicentral state control), and zones of local semiautonomy with weak state control. Throughout the Ottoman period the level of actual power and control that the state had over a specific region varied over time. The Ottomans arguably never had central control over the entire region at any given time. Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Ottomans apportioned lands in Eastern Anatolia as *yurtluk*, *ocaklık*, *hükümet*, and *salyaneli*. In lands designated as *salyaneli* the Ottomans appointed regularly rotated outsiders to the leading position and

---

<sup>5</sup> Evliya Çelebi's accounts of his travels in Eastern Anatolia during the mid-1600s provide some insight into the power sharing between the state and the periphery. For instance he makes it clear that the *beys* of Bitlis managed to maintain a significant degree of independence from Istanbul. However, the lack of reliable statistics and court records makes it nearly impossible to determine the extent of autonomy. See Robert Dankoff, ed., *Evliya Çelebi in Bitlis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 12-18.

<sup>6</sup> Robert H. Hewson, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 148.

regularly collected taxes and recruited soldiers. In land designated as *ocaklık*, the prominent local elite of the region, or *bey*, was appointed as *sancakbeği*, the head position of the Ottoman administrative division *sancak*. On condition of his loyalty, he was privileged to pass his political office to one of his sons. At the same time the head of the *ocaklık* was to allow outsiders to hold *timar*, *zeamet*, and *has*<sup>7</sup> lands, allow the Ottoman government to establish *tahrirs* (tax registries), and provide the sultan with soldiers at his behest. *Yurtluk* lands were practically the same as *ocaklık* lands except that the position of *sancakbeği* was not to be inherited by the *bey*'s sons.<sup>8</sup> In both *yurtluk* and *ocaklık* lands, holders were not allowed to sell or donate the land, nor turn it into a religious endowment (*vakıf*).<sup>9</sup>

Lands designated as *hükiüms* were essentially large land holdings (*has*) whose holders were granted general exemptions from taxation and military service, although occasionally Ottoman officials would request from inhabitants a payment of tribute or service as irregulars in the military. The *hükiüms* were *de facto* private property. The Ottoman state did not generally intervene in the internal political affairs of the *hükiüms* and recognized whatever group assumed power as the legitimate power-holder, on the

---

<sup>7</sup> Lands known as *timar*, *zeamet*, and *has* were lands given by the state to high-ranking military officials in compensation for their military service. Those entitled to these lands were responsible for upkeep on the land and collecting taxes from it. Lands known as *timars* produced less than 20,000 *akçes* in annual taxes, lands that produced between 20,000 and 100,000 *akçes* were known as *zeamets*, and lands that produced more than 100,000 *akçes* were called *has*. Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, 52.

<sup>8</sup> Géza Dávid, "Administration, Central," *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston, Bruce Alan Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 14; Also see Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London; New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992), 158-160.

<sup>9</sup> Yılmaz Kurt, "XVI. Yüzyılda Adana Tarihi" [The History of Adana in the Sixteenth Century] (PhD. diss., Hacettepe University, Ankara 1992), 27.

condition that they not create or aid political opposition.<sup>10</sup>

According to Ottoman registrars between 1631 and 1740 a large number of *sancaks* in the *eyalets* (provinces) of Şehrızor, Kars, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, and Van away from the provincial capitals were held as *yurtluk* or *ocaklık* lands. *Hükümet*s were to be found in the Diyarbakır and Van provinces only, specifically in the *sancaks* of Hazzo, Cizre, Palu, Genç, and Eğil in the Diyarbakır *eyalet* and the *sancaks* of Bitlis, Hakkari, Hizan, and Mahmudi. *Yurtluk* and *ocaklık* lands were often offered as incentives for loyalty to generally Kurdish Muslim leaders along the border regions. *Hükümet* lands were given to leaders particularly in mountainous rugged regions that were difficult to access. None of these were located near border of Iran, with the exception of Hakkari and Mahmudi (modern-day Güzelsu), the terrains of which are particularly difficult for armies to traverse.<sup>11</sup> By the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, *yurtluk* and *ocaklık* lands were merged as a single land assignment called *yurtluk-ocaklık*. Between 1750 and 1840 Beyazıt and Muş grew to be among the largest *yurtluk-ocaklık* holdings in Eastern Anatolia whose proprietorship was passed down hereditarily, as will be shown later.

---

<sup>10</sup> Evliya Çelebi notes on his visit to the Diyarbakır region in the mid-seventeenth century that the *hükümet*s of Palu, Genç, Cizre, Hazo, and Eğil were essentially *has* lands that were still subject to tax collection and military obligations, but fewer of them. Evliya Çelebi, Martin van Bruinessen, Iendrik Boeschoten, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir: The Relevant Section of the Seyahatname* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1988), 23-27, 123-127. Also see Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, 158; Mehmet Ali Ünal, “XVI. Yüzyılda Palu Hükümeti” [The Palu Hükümet During the Sixteenth Century], *Ondukuzmayıs Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 7 (December 1992): 241-265; Mehmet Ali Ünal, “XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllarda Diyarbekir Eyaletine Tabi Sancakların İdari Statüleri” [The Administrative Statutes of the Sancaks in the Diyarbakır Eyalet During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries], *Ziya Gökalp Dergisi* 44 (December 1986): 31-40; and Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, 56-57.

<sup>11</sup> Orhan Kılıç, “Ocaklık Sancakların Osmanlı Hukukunda ve İdari Tatbikattaki Yeri” [The Place of *Ocaklık Sancaks* in Ottoman Law and Administration], *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 11, no. 1 (January 2001): 262-263.

Also, between the same periods, the Ottomans seemed to make a concerted effort to reduce the number of *hükümet* lands and either merge them with larger *yurtluk-ocaklık* lands or recognize them as their own *yurtluk-ocaklık*. This was especially the case after the Ottoman-Persian war 1821-1823 and the Russo-Ottoman war 1828-1829. For instance, Ottoman documents record Hakkari as “*hükümet-i Hakkari*” (the *hükümet* of Hakkari) in 1821,<sup>12</sup> but referred to it as *yurtluk-ocaklık* land by 1827. Palu, which had been recognized as the “*Palu hükümeti*” (the *hükümet* of Palu) in documents in 1801<sup>13</sup> was recognized as *yurtluk-ocaklık* in 1841.<sup>14</sup>

The Ottomans’ decision to keep their political control over Eastern Anatolia somewhat loose and decentralized was partly the result of deliberated strategy and partly of insufficient resources.<sup>15</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, the Ottomans had acquired vast territories to defend, but they were unable to keep up military expansion at a pace that was sufficiently rapid and cost-effective to be able to fund the territorial integration of peripheral regions into its administrative center. This was due to a number of factors including internal struggle within its military, its political stalemate with Persia, its difficulty of defending against opposition movements (often foreign-backed) in eastern Europe and the region north of the Black Sea (during the eighteenth century), and its inability to expand into Austria and beyond. Consequently, the Ottomans pursued a

---

<sup>12</sup> BBA, HAT 820/37372, 25 Rebiyülahır 1236/30 January 1821.

<sup>13</sup> BBA, C.DRB 47/2312, 16 Şaban 1216/22 December 1801.

<sup>14</sup> Fatih Gencer, “Merkezîleşme Politikaları Sürecinde Yurtluk-Ocaklık Sisteminin Değişimi” [The Alteration of the Yurtluk-Ocaklık System in the Process of Centralization Policies], *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 30, no. 49, (2011): 78.

<sup>15</sup> See Yaşar Yücel, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Desantralizasyona (Adem-i Merkeziyet) Dair Gözlemler” [Observations on Decentralization in the Ottoman Empire], *Belleten* 28, no. 152 (1974): 657-708.

policy of defensive *realpolitik*<sup>16</sup> in relation to peripheral regions, particularly near its borders with Persia.<sup>17</sup> According to this policy, the Ottomans sought to avoid spreading their resources too thin by diverting them away from the periphery and towards both the center and select peripheral regions under the greatest political threat. It should be noted that this trend was the opposite of its earlier policy of offensive *realpolitik*, according to which it concentrated its resources in its periphery with hope of enabling rapid acquisition of population and land.

Since early conquest, the Ottomans had invested in maintaining relatively tight control over the administrative affairs of particularly Trabzon, Erzurum, and Diyarbakır, as well as Van and Kars to a lesser extent. They oversaw appointments to political positions and internal politics in these cities much more closely than in other areas of eastern and southeastern Anatolia. The Ottomans chose to concentrate their resources in these specific cities because their geographical locations made them the easiest passage into Central Anatolia from the Caucasus, Iran, and Iraq, and failure to fortify them increased the vulnerability of the Ottoman heartland. By contrast, Anatolia was more difficult to penetrate via the Cizre, Bitlis, and Muş regions. Hence the Ottomans chose not reinforce those regions as much.

---

<sup>16</sup> The notion that the Ottoman Empire progressively degenerated from a highly centralized political entity in the sixteenth century to a semifeudal entity in subsequent centuries is incorrect. Heper rises to this point in Metin Heper, "Center and Periphery in the Ottoman Empire, With Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century," *International Political Science Review* 1, no. 1 (January 1980): 81-104. However, there was an ostensible change in policy in relation to Eastern Anatolia between 1639 and 1736. This is evidenced by the fact that semiautonomous Kurdish *beyliks* appeared to expand their domains of influence during this period, a sign that both the Ottoman and Persian governments had focused their attentions away from the region.

<sup>17</sup> Karaosmanoğlu, "The Evolution of the National Security," 201-204.

The growth and strength of semiautonomous Kurdish political groups appeared to loosely correspond with the state of relations between the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Between the mid-1600s to the mid-1700s, a period of relative stability and peace, albeit a cold peace, prevailed between the rival states. They agreed to seek one another's approval for appointments for governors of border provinces.<sup>18</sup> Many of the prominent Kurdish families located in semiautonomous territories grew in power and influence. Kurdish families in Bitlis, Mahmudi (Güzelsu), Amadiya, Şehrizar (Rawanduz), Bohtan (Cizre), Süleymaniye, and Hakkari, were among the most powerful.<sup>19</sup> The expansion of their political domains was largely a product of this period of Ottoman-Persian peace. Since neither state was making any serious attempts to play dynastic rival against each other, local opposition from among family and competing tribes had little foreign basis with which to gain force for an opposition movement. Consequently local Kurdish elites were able to centralize control in semiautonomous regions.

Decentralization opened opportunity spaces for Kurdish elites to increase their power. Between 1750 and 1800, the house of Baban in Şehrizar, the house of Alaeddin in Muş, and the house of İshak in Beyazıt grew increasingly powerful, much to the chagrin of the central administration. The Babans managed to maintain their autonomy from the Ottomans between 1750 and the 1820s by manipulating the delicate balance of

---

<sup>18</sup> Graham Williamson, "The Turko-Persian War 1821-1823: Winning the War but Losing the Peace," in *War and Peace in Qajar Persia: Implications Past and Present*, ed. Roxane Farmanfarmaian (London; New York: Routledge, 2008): 88-89.

<sup>19</sup> Sevgen refers to these principalities as "*beyliks*" although they exhibited all the key characteristics of *hükûmets*. See Nazmi Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri: Osmanlı Belgeleri ile Kürt Türkleri Tarihi* [Turkish *Beyliks* in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia: Kurdish and Turkish History with Ottoman Documents] (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1982), 52-60, 134-240.



power in the region among the Ottomans, Persians, and Mamluks. Their power over southern Şehrizor was considerably reduced in 1831 when Sultan Mahmud II restored his authority over Baghdad. Kör Mehmet Bey of Soran further eroded the Babans' control over northern Şehrizor during his military campaigns between 1831 and 1834.<sup>20</sup> Still, it was not until 1851 that the Ottomans managed to remove the last Baban *emir* from power.<sup>21</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the Babans in any detail, they were the first Kurdish family to launch a resistance through large-scale political coordination with neighboring Kurdish groups. Kör Mehmet Bey of Soran and Bedr Khan Bey of Cizre applied a similar method of resistance to the Ottoman state.

The Ottomans appointed Alaeddin Bey, a local magnate from the Muş region, to be the *mütesellim*<sup>22</sup> of the Muş *sancak* (which was under the jurisdiction of the Erzurum *eyalet*) during the 1740s. In 1747, territorial disputes arose between Alaeddin Bey and the *khan* of Bitlis, in which the former proved to have the upper hand.<sup>23</sup> Since the *vali* of Erzurum feared that Alaeddin would amass power in the region, he urged the sultan to

---

<sup>20</sup> Discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>21</sup> For a summary of the struggles of the Babans against the Ottomans, Persians, and Mamluks, see Michael Eppel, "The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates: The Impact of Ottoman Reforms and International Relations on Kurdistan during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008): 240-243.

<sup>22</sup> The title for the local notable who was appointed by the Ottoman government to oversee political affairs of the town and collected taxes. See Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, 63, 72.

<sup>23</sup> The *beys* or *khans* of Bitlis were powerful and semiindependent during the 1600s. However, they were gradually overshadowed by the elites at Muş. According to James Brant, "[t]he Begs of Bitlis were always powerful enough to preserve their independence until they were subdued by the father of Emin Pasha, since which time, the Beglik has been attached to the Pashalik of Mush. Eighty villages were said to be under the command of Sherif Beg, and his territory forms therefore about one-third of the whole Pashalik. During their independence the Begs struck a small copper coin which is still current at Bitlis." James Brant, "Notes of Journey Through a Part of Kurdistan, in the Summer of 1838," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 10 (1841): 380-381.

back the *khan* of Bitlis in order to preserve the balance of power in the Ottomans' favor. However, the Ottomans' war with Nader Shah between 1743 and 1746, in which they had sustained great losses and made no territorial gains, left them in a weak and vulnerable position. Consequently, they were unable to keep Alaeddin from taking control of Bitlis in the same year.<sup>24</sup> Yet between 1751 and 1754, the *vali* of Erzurum managed to enlist the support of in Mahmud Bey of Beyazıt<sup>25</sup> and Çeteci Abdullah Paşa,<sup>26</sup> who feared that the rebel *mütesellim* of Muş would encroach on their territory, against Alaeddin, eventually forcing him and his coterie to retreat to the mountains.<sup>27</sup> Although the state-led joint force was unable to dislodge Alaeddin, the Ottomans agreed to concede to him the privilege of holding the *sancak* of Muş as a *yurtluk-ocaklık*, which entitled his family to hereditary control. To keep his power in check, the Ottomans conceded the *sancaks* of Hınıs and Tekman to Mahmud Bey of Beyazıt, thus expanding his landholdings.<sup>28</sup> They

---

<sup>24</sup> Note from the *vali* of Erzurum, BBA, C.DH. 270/13478, 13 Cemaziyülahır 1160/22 June 1747; Mehmet İnbaşı, "XVIII. Yüzyılda Bitlis Sancağı ve İdarecileri" [Bitlis Province and its Governors During the Eighteenth Century], *A.U. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 33 (2007): 250-251.

<sup>25</sup> The local Kurdish *mutasarrıf* of Beyazıt, who commanded the allegiance of several Kurdish tribal groups along the Ottoman-Iranian border, helped keep Alaeddin from expanding his control over the strategic enclaves of Hınıs and Tekman located north of Muş, see BBA, C.DH, 194/9667, 29 Cemaziyülevvel 1167/23 April 1754.

<sup>26</sup> Çeteci Abdullah Paşa was a Kurd from the Diyarbakır province, who had served as its *vali* several times. The Ottomans appointed him to the position of *vali* of Van to help with the effort against Alaeddin Bey. Abdullah Paşa had proven an effective military and political strategist against Nader Shah during the 1743-1746 war. He was also effective at settling tribes to the south of Diyarbakır. See Abdurrahman Ateş, "Avşarlı Nadir Şah ve Döneminde Osmanlı-İran Mücadeleleri" [Nader Shah Afshari and the Ottoman-Iranian Conflicts during his Period] (PhD diss., Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta, 2001), 106-107; BBA, AE.SMHD.I, 78/5200, 27 Safer 1164/15 January 1751.

<sup>27</sup> BBA, C.DH, 238/11866, 29 Recep 1167/22 May 1754.

<sup>28</sup> BBA, C.DH, 102/5090, 28 Cemaziyülevvel 1172/26 February 1759.

also attempted to restore the *beys* of Bitlis to power, although with only modest success.<sup>29</sup>

As *mütesellim* of Muş, Alaeddin Bey is reputed to have patronized the Armenians of the region subject to him. He encouraged Armenian settlement in Muş and protected them against the forays of other Kurds.<sup>30</sup> His sons carried on relatively good relations with local Armenians. One of the most prominent allies of family of Alaeddin was Bishop Jonah (Hovnan) of the Surp Garabet monastery,<sup>31</sup> who had great local repute among Armenians, both lay and clergy, throughout Eastern Anatolia. In 1763, he sought to join forces with Armenian political activist Joseph Emin, who was at that time in the Caucasus. He sent a letter to Emin via “Curd [*sic*] Armenians”<sup>32</sup> informing him that he was capable of assembling a force of some “40,000 fighting men.” In addition, he announced that when Emin arrived at Muş that the “Assyrians and Yezdy Curds [*sic*]” would be ready to “join” them.<sup>33</sup> Emin also informed Prince Heraclius of Georgia, who

---

<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that the Ottomans rotated the local elites in Bitlis in and out of power about every one to three years between 1756 and 1797. This is a sign that the Ottomans, due in large part to threat of Alaeddin *bey*, had managed to regain some control over Bitlis. See Mehmet İnbaşı, “Van Valileri (1755-1835)” [The Valis of Van (1755-1835)], *A.Ü. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 29 (2006): 205-207.

<sup>30</sup> Simeon, Catholicos of Armenia; Ghukas, Karnets‘i Catholicos; Daniel, Surmaretsi Catholicos of Armenia; Dawit, Enegettsi Catholicos of Armenia; Hovsep Arghuteants, Catholicos of Armenia; Manuel, Kiwmiwshkhanetsi; Giut Aghaneants, eds., *Divan Hayots Patmutyan* [Register of Armenian History] (Tiflis: Tparan M. Sharadze, 1912), 13: 285-291.

<sup>31</sup> Muş was undoubtedly an important place of Armenian culture and civilization. In 1859, the Russian Consul at Trabzon wrote that “Mush, after Etchmiadzin, is the most holy place for the Armenian-Gregorians.” George A. Bournoutian, ed., *Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia, 1797-1889: A Documentary Record* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1980), 422.

<sup>32</sup> In his autobiography, Emin refers to Armenians living in eastern and southeastern Anatolia by this name, yet another indication of some of the cultural and linguistic fusion that had occurred among Armenians and Kurds in the region. See Emin, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin*, 298, 316-317.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

had inquired about the preparation of the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia, that he could mobilize a force of ten thousand Armenian cavalry from Muş, yet another indication of the Armenians' strength in Muş region given the fact that non-Muslims had traditionally been forbidden from riding horses.<sup>34</sup> However, Georgian Prince Heraclius' decision to withdraw support and Catholicos Simeon's disapproval of Emin's political activity eventually stifled the political ambitions of Bishop Jonah and Emin.

In the 1780s Bishop Jonah was replaced by Astvatsatur Nshets, who continued a friendly relationship with the Kurds. Murat Bey, Alaeddin's son and heir to his power, visited Surp Garabet Monastery after it was destroyed in an earthquake in 1805 and promised Nshets that he would help provide the resources needed to rebuild it (it was rebuilt by two Armenian architects, one from Palu and the other from Bitlis) and restore the economy that revolved around it as a holy pilgrimage site.<sup>35</sup> Murat also fended off İshak Paşa of Beyazıt (the son of Mahmud Bey) from raiding Muş crushing their forces near Eleşkirt.<sup>36</sup> However, after Murat's death in the early 1800s, struggle ensued between rival family members and the cordial relationship between Armenians and Kurds deteriorated greatly.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Ottomans also made greater concessions to Kurdish elites in the *sancak* of Beyazıt, a strategic border town near the Iranian border. In 1771, the Ottomans recognized İshak Paşa as the *mir-e miran* (the prince of princes)

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>35</sup> Garo Sasuni, *Badmutyun Daroni Ashkharhi* [History of the Muş Region] (Beirut: Hradaragutyun Daron-Turuberani Hayrenaktsagan Myutyan Getronagan Varchutyan, 1956), 166-167.

<sup>36</sup> H.M. Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyun* [History of Sasun] (Yerevan: Hayastan Hratarakchutyan, 1985), 29.

and appointed him to the position of *mutasarrıf* of Beyazıt with the privilege of holding the land as *yurtluk-ocaklık* until his death in 1800.<sup>37</sup> Throughout his tenure, İshak Paşa vigorously attempted to outbid local rivals and expand his political domain. In 1779, İshak Paşa forcibly removed and imprisoned the Kurdish *bey* of Eleşkirt and replaced him with his relative Abdallah Bey.<sup>38</sup> In 1789, he led cross-border forays into Iranian territory in order to subdue rival tribes and seize control of their lands.<sup>39</sup> In spite of complaints against him from the Khan of Yerevan and the *vali* of Erzurum, the central Ottoman administration was generally hesitant to take any rash action against him lest they disrupt the delicate balance of power that existed between them and Iran. State officials did, however, appear to try to limit the extent of İshak Paşa's landholdings. In 1797 (notably after the collapse of the Zand dynasty in Iran) Yusuf Ziya Paşa, an important political ally of the sultan who was then the *vali* of Erzurum, attempted to alienate Tekman and Hınıs from İshak Paşa citing his alleged "injustice and cruelty" against the inhabitants of those regions as a justification for intervention, but to no avail.<sup>40</sup>

Upon İshak Paşa's death in 1800, periodic power struggles ensued between his sons for over two decades. The Ottomans went to great lengths to keep the region under the control of the heir who appeared to be the most loyal to the sultan, the most capable of mobilizing force against foreign invasion, and the most capable of maintaining order in

---

<sup>37</sup> BBA, C.DH 202/10061, 29 Cemaziyülahır 1185/October 9 1771; BBA, C.DH. 469/19071, 14 Sefer 1215/7 July 1800. He had acquired great amounts of wealth by exploiting his political position. Some of his heirs complained to his successor Mahmud Paşa about not receiving their due inheritances in full.

<sup>38</sup> BBA, HAT 29/1387, 23 Rebiyülahır 1193/10 May 1779.

<sup>39</sup> BBA, C.HR. 38/1883, 29 Rebiyülevvel 1204/17 December 1789.

<sup>40</sup> BBA, HAT 63/2753/G, 17 Cemaziyülevvel 1212/7 November 1797.

the *sancak* of Beyazıt. In 1800, the Ottomans recognized Mahmud Paşa as the legitimate heir to his father İshak Paşa's *yurtluk-ocaklık* at Beyazıt. During his tenure, political struggle intensified with the *mutasarrıf* of Muş, who attempted to rally the Ottomans to his side by accusing Mahmud of "oppressing the poor (*fukaraya zulüm*) in Hınıs and Tekman."<sup>41</sup> Since Murat was a crucial ally to the central administration against the rebellion of Erzurum *vali* Gürcü Osman Paşa at that time and since Mahmud's standing towards the rebel leader was unclear, the Ottomans decided to place the villages under the jurisdiction of the Muş *mutasarrıflık*.<sup>42</sup>

Upon Mahmud's death in 1806, the Ottomans appointed his brother Ibrahim Paşa as *mutasarrıf* of Beyazıt.<sup>43</sup> However, since many complained that he was mentally impaired (*aklı noksan*), and since his nephew Behlül appeared to have more supporters, the Ottomans recognized the latter as the *mutasarrıf* in 1807.<sup>44</sup>

It is noteworthy that Şehrızor, Muş, and Beyazıt were all located at the margins of the Kurdish-inhabited region of the Ottoman Empire. This location proved strategic for the elites of all three regions for it spared them the burden of facing potential rivalry from neighboring Kurdish *beyliks* from one direction. Since the house of Baban in Şehrızor faced no potential Kurdish rivals to the south, they managed to 1) concentrate their resources in absorbing territory held by the Kurdish *beys* of Soran to the north, which they accomplished in the mid-1600s, and 2) focus their efforts on occupying the lands

---

<sup>41</sup> Grand Vizier Yusuf Ziya Paşa to Erzurum Customs Official (Gümrük Emni) Mehmed Efendi, BBA, C.ML. 457/18547, 24 Cemaziyülevvel 1218/11 September 1803.

<sup>42</sup> BBA, C.ML. 457/18547, 24 Cemaziyülevvel 1218/11 September 1803.

<sup>43</sup> See BBA, C.ML. 758/30886, 7 Cemaziyülevvel 1215/26 September 1800 and BBA, C.ML. 571/23356, 29 Sefer 1221/18 May 1806.

<sup>44</sup> BBA, HAT 1364/53898, 29 Zilhicce 1222/27 February 1808.

held by the Kurdish house of Ardalan in Sanandaj, Iran.<sup>45</sup> The Kurdish *beys* of Beyazıt faced little challenge to their land and power from the east where a multiethnic Azeri Turk, Armenian, Assyrian, and Kurdish society competed with each other for power under the loose control of Iranian *khans*. Furthermore, Ottoman-Iranian border diplomacy was more effective in the northern part of the Kurdish-inhabited areas than the southern part. This allowed the *beys* of Beyazıt to focus their political and military efforts on bringing Eleşkirt, Hınıs, and Tekman under their control. The *beys* of Muş had no significant Kurdish rival to the north (with the exception of local Kurdish *ağas* in Hınıs and Tekman, whose power was weakened by both the *valis* of Erzurum and the Kurdish *beys* of Beyazıt). Thus, without a major northern rival they had more resources to spare against the Kurdish elites of Bitlis. Once they managed to subdue them, they focused their energies on what would become a stalemate struggle against the *beys* of Beyazıt. Since Kurdish *beyliks* in between these regions, such as the *beyliks* of Soran, Amadia, Bohtan, Hakkari, and Ridwan, were in essence surrounded with potential rivals, they did not manage to expand their influence and political domain until the Ottomans minimized the power of the *beys* of Muş, Beyazıt, and Şehrızor in the 1830s.

#### Initial Centralization Efforts in Eastern Anatolia

Russia's victories against the Ottoman Empire in the 1768-1774 and 1787-1792 wars provided impetus for reform of the traditional Ottoman military and bureaucratic system. Sultan Selim III was most intent on replacing the old Janissary military corps with a new professional army, which he sought to fund with new taxes on a number of

---

<sup>45</sup> See Stephen Helmsley Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 79-80.

commodities. However, he also sought to reduce the power of *valis* in *eyalets* by reducing their term limits. He commenced his military reform project by introducing the *nizam-i cedit* army almost immediately following signing the Treaty of Jassy in 1792. However, his reform efforts did not gain significant momentum until after he ousted the French from Egypt in 1801.

The Balkans were the primary target of military reform where Selim III focused most of his efforts to replace Janissary elites. However, the sultan was met with stiff resistance by *ulema*, *esnafs*, and Janissaries throughout the Balkans, particularly in northern Bulgaria, where a local rebel from Vidin, Osman Pasvanoğlu, led a rebellion against the sultan that lasted until 1807.<sup>46</sup> Eastern Anatolia was not subjected to Selim III's military reform to the same extent, largely because the Janissaries did not have as much control over the region and relied on Kurdish irregulars, or *levends*, for defense during times of war.

The sultan's modest attempts to implement political, military, and financial reforms in the region were widely unpopular. Locals fiercely opposed the installment of the thirty-first military battalion (*31'inci ordu ortası*) in Diyarbakır in 1802. The *mufti* Mesud Efendi and a group of *esnafs* (merchants and guildsmen) led a group of local inhabitants of the city of Diyarbakır to protest the new battalion as well as the central Ottoman authority's new financial reforms. The protestors, who were all Muslims with the exception of one Christian, expressed their discontent by destroying the local cloth press, *mengenehane*, which had become the symbol of Ottoman central economic control

---

<sup>46</sup> Robert Zens, "Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa and the Paşalık of Belgrade, 1791-1807," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8, 1-2 (Spring 2002): 89-104.



over the city. In response the central authorities exiled (or at least threatened to exile) 128 persons, including Mesud Efendi and a number of other *ulema* and *esnafs*. However, a local *bey*, Şeyhzade İbrahim Paşa, negotiated a deal with the Ottomans under which the protestors would be allowed to return on the condition that they lay down their weapons and pay damages.<sup>47</sup> Fearing continued unrest, the Ottomans withdrew the thirty-first brigade in 1803; however, they exacted steep compensation from the local rebel *esnafs* and *ulema* for the economic havoc that they wrought and they managed to maintain an upper hand on the management of the cloth press.<sup>48</sup>

Gürcü Osman Paşa was also opposed to Selim III's aggressive reform efforts and decided to stage a revolt in 1802.<sup>49</sup> The Ottomans, fearing the worst, enlisted the support of the *mütesellim* of Muş Murat Paşa, recently appointed Trabzon *vali* Tayyar Paşa, and Çıldır *vali* Selim Paşa to put down Osman Paşa's resistance and arrest those responsible. Gürcü Osman Paşa was able to evade capture for a number of months by fleeing Erzurum and heading south where he armed a number of his followers, allied with Memooğlu, a local brigand (*şaki*) from Bitlis, and allegedly plotted a siege on Erzurum in 1803 (which never came to fruition).<sup>50</sup> Osman Paşa was eventually captured by Murat Paşa, who

---

<sup>47</sup> İbrahim Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır: (1790-1840): (Fizikî, İdarî ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı)* [Diyarbakır during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century (1790-1840)(Physical, Administrative, and Socioeconomic Structure)] (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), 249-250.

<sup>48</sup> Ariel Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 2004), 170-172.

<sup>49</sup> BBA, HAT 47/2303/J, 29 Zilhicce 1216/2 May 1802; BBA, HAT 96/3869, 12 Recep 1218/28 October 1803.

<sup>50</sup> BBA, HAT 175/7583/B, 04 Muharram 1218/26 April 1803. Gürcü Osman Paşa's name "Gürcü" suggests that he was of Georgian ethnic origin. Yet it is unclear how much clout he had among ethnic Georgians of the region. One major reason that he would not have been able to rally the support of Georgians from the Caucasus was the fact that he was a Muslim, the required religious affiliation for all *valis* in the Ottoman Empire, and not a

despite orders from Tayyar Paşa that he be kept alive, cut off his head and sent it to Istanbul. The reason for his brutal display of power could have been to prove his successful capture and loyalty to the sultan, and also perhaps desire for revenge against Osman for emboldening his rivals in Bitlis, a region over which Murat's family had long sought claim. After Osman's Paşa's capture, the Ottomans appointed Tayyar Paşa as the interim *vali* of Erzurum, thus conjoining the *eyalets* of Trabzon and Erzurum, and annexed Hınıs and Tekman to Murat Paşa's *yurtluk-ocaklık* land holdings.<sup>51</sup>

The suppression of Gürcü Osman Paşa's revolt appeared to escalate turmoil throughout Eastern Anatolia. *Valis* and *mutasarrıfs* in the region began accusing each other of either plotting sedition or usurping power. Most notably Tayyar Paşa accused the *vali* of Van Mehmet Sadık Paşa, with whom Murat had allied, of coming to power illegitimately through a forged decree (*sahte ferman*), oppressing and plundering locals, forming an opposition coalition with the semiautonomous *beys* of Mahmudi (Güzelsu, located between Van and Başkale) and Hakkari, and attempting to mint and circulate his own currency. He enlisted the support of Emin Paşa, the former *muhafız* of Kars and Van, and his younger brother Derviş Paşa and his uncle Abdullah against Mehmet Sadık, who had seized much of their wealth. In 1804 Tayyar captured Mehmet Sadık and beheaded him and the Ottomans installed Feyzi Paşa in his stead.<sup>52</sup>

Tayyar Paşa's vendetta in Van was met with great disapproval by Ottoman

---

Christian. Nonetheless the fact that a *vali* and not just a mere janissary or member of the *ulema* or *esnaf* class was staging revolt was alarming enough to the Ottoman central authority.

<sup>51</sup> BBA, HAT 96/3885, 29 Zilkade 1218/10 April 1804; Fatih Gencer, "Van Muhafızı Derviş Paşa İsyanı" [The Revolt of the Guardian of Van: Derviş Paşa], *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 29, no. 47 (2010): 198-200.

<sup>52</sup> Gencer, "Van Muhafızı Derviş Paşa İsyanı," 198-200.

authorities who, upon hearing of his excesses, ordered his removal. However, Tayyar dismissed the order and built a strong resistance movement and the sultan and his general called for military and financial reforms. He managed to draw the support of a great number of local *beys* and *paşas* throughout Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea region (as far as Amasya and Diyarbakır) by rallying them against Sultan Selim III's reform project, on the basis of its being Western innovation and contrary to Islamic law and tradition.<sup>53</sup> However, Ottoman forces succeeded in removing Tayyar Paşa from power in May 1805.<sup>54</sup> The central administration replaced Tayyar Paşa with Yusuf Ziya Paşa, an ethnic Georgian from northeastern Anatolia and close ally of the sultan who had served twice as Grand-Vizier and as the *vali* of Diyarbakır, Çıldır, and Erzurum.<sup>55</sup>

The Ottoman central authority hoped that it could maintain order in Van with Feyzi Paşa in charge. However, Emin Paşa, his brother Derviş Bey, and his uncle Abdullah Ağa rallied local supporters in Van against the newly appointed *vali*. Feyzi was initially able to put down resistance and capture and execute Emin and Abdullah. However, Derviş Bey managed to escape with his followers to a nearby mountainous enclave and seize much of the wealth left by the former *vali* Mehmet Sadık Paşa. In

---

<sup>53</sup> BBA, HAT 102/4048/G, 3 Rebiyülevvel 1220/1 June 1805; BBA HAT 102/4048/B, 7 Rebiyülevvel 1220/5 June 1805; BBA, HAT 102/4048/A, 19 Rebiyülevvel 1220/17 June 1805.

<sup>54</sup> BBA, C.ML 65/2975, 15 Ramazan 1220/9 December 1805. Also see Abdullah Saydam, "Trabzon'un İdarî Yapısı ve Yenileşme Zarureti (1793-1851) [The Administrative Structure of Trabzon and the Necessity of Modernization, 1793-1851], *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 18 (2006): 289-292; Abdullah Bay, "Trabzon Eyaletinde Müttegallibe Hareketleri ve Âyanlık (1750-1850) [Notables and Warlord Movements in the Trabzon Eyalet (1750-1850)] (PhD diss., Atatürk Üniversitesi, Erzurum, 2007), 111-114, 184-186, 307.

<sup>55</sup> Murat Kasap, *Georgian Friendship Association*, <http://www.gdd.org.tr/tarihtendeta.asp?id=91>, accessed October 15, 2014.

1806, he stormed Van with his militia, killing Feyzi Paşa, and proclaiming himself both the “*vali* and the *muhafız*” of Van by “forged decree” (*sahte ferman*).<sup>56</sup> Since the Ottomans did not want to risk sparking further conflict in its already vulnerable eastern regions, they recognized Derviş Bey as the *vali* of Van and gave him the title of *paşa*. He held his position until the Ottomans forcibly removed him in 1819.

Derviş Paşa’s stance on Selim III’s reforms are unclear. Yet his rise to power in Van can be understood as an indirect product of the wave of resistance to Sultan Selim III’s reform efforts.<sup>57</sup> Derviş Paşa’s usurpation of power broke the pattern of regular, nearly annual, rotations of *valis* (who comprised both locals and nonlocals) that the Sublime Porte had been undertaking since 1755.<sup>58</sup> With the rise of the Qajar dynasty to power in Iran and Russian intrigues in the Caucasus, Derviş Paşa’s defeat of Feyzi Paşa came at an inopportune and tense period. Ottoman authorities in Istanbul were forced to tread even more carefully in their policy-making in Van and had no guarantee of loyalty on the part of Derviş.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> BBA, HAT 78/3236, 13 Cemaziyülevvel 1221/29 July 1806.

<sup>57</sup> The origins of Derviş Paşa are not certain. However, the fact that his uncle Abdullah Ağa held the title of *ağa* (a title denoting his landowning status), and that he was able to acquire the support of a number of local groups suggest that he had local roots. It should also be mentioned that Feyzi Paşa probably had local (Kurdish) origins as well, given the fact that his brothers Yusuf and Mehmet were present with him while trying to defend against Derviş Bey. Gencer, “Van Muhafızı Derviş Paşa,” 201.

<sup>58</sup> It should be pointed out that the Ottomans did not always choose completely different people to rotate in and out of the position of the *valilik* of Van. The Ottomans kept nonlocals Timur and Ahmed Paşas as the *valis* between 1773 and 1792. Mehmet İnbaşı, “Van Valileri,” 203-204.

<sup>59</sup> See BBA, C.AS 1004/43956, 29 Şevval 1190/11 December 1776.

### Waning Central Control and Political Uncertainty

Rebellion in Serbia in 1804 and widespread revolts by conservative political forces and the Janissaries in 1807 brought the Ottoman Empire to a state of political disarray. To make matters more difficult for the Ottomans, they were greatly pressured by the French to declare war on Russia in 1806, a move for which they were greatly underprepared. It is remarkable that the Ottomans were able to muster a force strong enough to mitigate, although not completely stave off, the Russian invasion of Wallachia, Bessarabia, and Moldavia in 1806. Yet it was during the war that Russia began to penetrate the Caucasus thus placing Eastern Anatolia under her threat for the first time in history.

Since the Russians were engaged in two simultaneous wars with Iran and France during the first half of 1807, Ottomans hoped that Russia would be weak enough in the Caucasus to make a push towards the Caspian Sea. Sultan Mustafa IV, who succeeded his embattled cousin Selim III in May 1807, called Yusuf Ziya Paşa, the *vali* of both Erzurum and Trabzon, the Muslim *emirs* of Dagestan, and the Persian forces under Abbas Mirza to “*jihad*” against the Russians.<sup>60</sup> Yusuf Ziya Paşa’s force of twenty thousand soldiers attempted to march on Gyumri, just across the border from Kars, to push back the Russians in June 1807. However, Ukrainian Count Ivan Vasilyevich Gudovich’s force of only six thousand men held them off just before at Arpaçay. The relative ease with which the Russians won the battle, sustaining only eighty-five casualties compared to over one thousand Ottoman casualties, dealt a large blow to the

---

<sup>60</sup> BBA, YB (21) 10/71, 4 Cemaziyülevvel 1222/10 July 1807; BBA, YB (21) 10/72, 23 Cemaziyülevvel 1222/29 July 1807.

morale of the Ottoman army in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>61</sup> Russia's peace with France in June 1807 at Tilsit further dampened hopes of a successful campaign in the Caucasus. Yet the Ottomans were strong enough to fend off a Russian advance into Akhaltsikhe in 1810.<sup>62</sup> When the war ended in 1812, neither side made any territorial gains on their border in the Caucasus. Nonetheless, the war had an overall destabilizing effect on the region.

Despite the motive of a common enemy, Iran and the Ottomans were unable to rid themselves of their suspicions for each other. Tensions between Iran and the Ottomans escalated in 1811 when a Kurdish group in Beyazıt launched a raid into Qajar-controlled Azerbaijan, which resulted in the destruction of some fifteen villages, and the Ottomans appointed a *vali* to Baghdad who was hostile to the Qajars. The Qajars declared these incidents grounds for war against the Ottomans and led an army of thirty thousand to sack Baghdad in 1812.<sup>63</sup> They also dispatched a force (possibly an Iranian Kurdish group) towards Kars, Beyazıt, Malazgirt, and Muş; however, it consisted of fewer men and did not do much other than carry out a few raids and plunder some villages.<sup>64</sup>

Local elites seized on the opportunity of the war to take greater control over affairs of the *eyalets* and *sancaks*. In 1809 Şeyhzade Ibrahim Paşa, a local Kurdish leader

---

<sup>61</sup> Hadji Murat Ibrahimbeyli, *Rossiya i Azerbaijan v Pervoy Treti XIX Veka: Iz Voenno-Politicheskoy Istorii* [Russia and Azerbaijan in the First Third of the Nineteenth Century: Military and Political History] (Moscow: Nauka, Glavnaya Redaktsiya Vosmochnoy Literatury, 1969), 56.

<sup>62</sup> Abdülvehhab Efendi to Grand Vizier Yusuf Ziya Paşa, BBA, HAT 1004/42120/C, 15 Zilhicce 1225/12 December 1810.

<sup>63</sup> Muriel Atkin, *Russia and Iran 1780-1828* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 113; Aziz Tekdemir, "XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Çeyreğinde Osmanlı-İran İhtilafları ve 1821-1823 Savaşı" [Ottoman-Iranian Conflict in the First Quarter of the Nineteenth Century and the 1821-1823 War], *Dergi Karadeniz* 4 (January 2009): 80.

<sup>64</sup> Erzurum *vali* Emin Paşa to Grand Vizier Hurşit Ahmet Paşa, BBA, HAT 1004/42115/A, 23 Şevval 1227/30 October 1812.

whose family held considerable political influence in the city of Diyarbakır, mobilized the city's local population, forced the Ottoman-appointed *vali* Mehmed Şerif Paşa out of power, and proclaimed himself the *vali*. One of İbrahim Paşa's justifications for taking power had been the lack of regularity of order in the city due to the Ottomans' frequent rotation of *valis*. He claimed that this created irregularity of tax collection, and allowed some groups to try to exploit transitions of power for their own advantages. Local *esnafs* also complained that the *valis* were brutish and abusive of their power and would often take from them without payment.<sup>65</sup>

Relations between Kurds and Armenians in the area north of Lake Van appeared to deteriorate during the war. This is largely because Muslims became increasingly suspicious of Armenians over their apparent sympathies towards Russia. Armenians in Muş came under some of the harshest persecution during the war. Their especially poor treatment is explained in part by the death of Murat Paşa, who had maintained a cordial relationship with the local Armenians, in 1807. Divisions in Murat's family over who would inherit his vast wealth led many family members to resort to desperate and austere measures in order gain leverage over one another and protect their futures. In 1807, Murat's brother, Yusuf Kamer Paşa, sought to increase his revenue by asking exorbitant sums from the Armenian clergy at Surp Garabet monastery. When Prelate Hagop of Surp Garabet refused to give Yusuf the burdensome sum of money that he was demanding, the former sought to kill him. Furthermore, he denied protection for Armenians against the burdensome demands of winter quarters (*kışlak*) to which seminomadic Kurdish groups traversing the region subjected them on an annual basis. In spite of the plea of Prelate

---

<sup>65</sup> Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır*, 248.

Guravtsi, who replaced Hagop in 1808, for recourse against the abuses of Yusuf Kamer Paşa from the Ottoman government, state officials, who were occupied with the war against Russia, did nothing to alleviate the condition of the Armenians.<sup>66</sup>

To avoid persecution by the Kurds, many Armenian religious elites began to try to raise money from Armenian peasants to pay the exorbitant sums that the Kurds were demanding and to win their good graces. In 1813, Catholicos Ephrem at Echmiadzin sent out an encyclical to the churches of Muş, Van, and Beyazıt accusing them of venality, corruption, and abusing their power over the Armenian people. He openly criticized Ghukas, the Catholicos of Aghtamar, of assuming power illegitimately (*anorinagan*).<sup>67</sup> The toll that the political disorder in Muş had taken on the Armenians in Muş is expressed by Bishop Nerses in 1814: “the pitiless nations [*azg*] of the Kurds and other races have reduced our land of Muş to almost nothing leaving hardly a building standing.”<sup>68</sup>

### Suppression of Resistance: Recapturing the East

After signing the Treaty of Bucharest with the Russians in 1812, under which Bessarabia and most of Georgia was ceded to Russia while the Ottomans retained Wallachia and Moldavia as well as the towns of Akhaltsikhe, Anapa, and Poti in Georgia,<sup>69</sup> the central Ottoman administration once again sought to centralize control over Eastern Anatolia. Russia’s conquest of much of the southern Caucasus, and the

---

<sup>66</sup> Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyun*, 35-36.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>68</sup> Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Madenataran), folder 24, doc. 16, cited in *ibid.*, 32.

<sup>69</sup> Andrew Robarts, “Treaty of Bucharest,” *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Bruce Masters and Gábor Ágoston (New York, NY: Facts On File, 2009), 94.



consequent erosion of a geographically rugged buffer zone between Eastern Anatolia and an expansion-bent Russian empire, gave Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) incentive and persuasive power among different Ottoman factions to embark on a new centralization campaign. In addition, the fact that relations with Iran remained tenuous and somewhat strained due to the cross-border raids of many of the unruly Kurdish tribes was yet further motivation to increase the central presence on the eastern periphery.

The Ottomans had managed to keep Erzurum under their control since the ouster of the rogue *vali* Tayyar Paşa in 1805. Their ability to stand their ground in Erzurum is attributable to a number of factors including the city's relative ease of geographic access, its economic prominence as a key trading post between Iran and Central Anatolia, and the fact that the Ottomans had long invested more military resources in defending their control of the city than any other area in Eastern Anatolia. However, the roots of Ottoman power did not run so deeply in Van and Diyarbakır.

Initially, Sultan Mahmud II treaded softly towards regaining central control over Eastern Anatolia. His main concerns were Van and Diyarbakır, which by 1812 were still under the control of the usurpers Derviş Paşa and Şeyzade İbrahim Paşa, respectively. The sultan feared that excessive aggression might require too many resources and end up actually pushing locals to side with the opposition, thereby increasing the level of threat that they posed to state authority. Hence, he tried to replace them with local figures who were popular among locals, but seemingly more loyal to the Ottoman state.

This strategy failed in Van. In both 1810 and 1812, the sultan appointed Abidin Paşa to replace Derviş Paşa. While Abidin had widespread support within the city of Van, Derviş mustered enough support from surrounding tribes to be able to put down the

meager efforts to unseat him from the *valilik* and force Abidin from the city.<sup>70</sup> According to Seyda Efendi, a state-appointed inspector who toured Erzurum, Muş, Beyazıt, and Van in 1813, Derviş Paşa had managed to establish himself as a relatively independent ruler in the region. He had close ties with the local Armenian community there and in fact his own treasurer and financier was a local Armenian by the name of Sarraf Hagop. He even had his own money minted and circulated throughout the Van *eyâlet*.<sup>71</sup>

In Diyarbakır, Şeyhzade İbrahim Paşa had enlisted the support of the local masses and a number of key social figures, including a high ranking clergyman Hacı Rağıp Efendi, to oust the widely unpopular Ottoman appointee Mehmed Şerif Paşa in 1809, his grip on the city's politics was more firm than Derviş's in Van.<sup>72</sup> Yet, upon İbrahim Paşa's death in 1813, the Ottomans were able to peaceably install Emin Paşa, an *ağa* from the Erzurum region,<sup>73</sup> as the replacement *vali* and appease the family of İbrahim Paşa by offering them high-ranking positions in the provincial government. İbrahim Paşa's grandson Mehmed Bey was appointed to the position of *mütesellim* of the Diyarbakır *eyâlet*.<sup>74</sup>

In areas designated as *yurtluk-ocaklık* lands, the Ottomans were more hesitant to centralize power for fear that local leaders might defect and perhaps strengthen the opposition leaders in Van and Diyarbakır. The sultan's strategy was therefore to secure

---

<sup>70</sup> Fatih Gencer, *Van Muhafızı Derviş Paşa*, 207-208.

<sup>71</sup> BBA, HAT 1227/47922, 29 Zilkade 1228/23 December 1813; Gencer, *Van Muhafızı Derviş Paşa*, 202-203.

<sup>72</sup> Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır*, 251.

<sup>73</sup> Yılmazçelik, "Osmanlı Hakimiyeti Süresince Diyarbakır Eyaleti Valileri (1516-1838)" [The Valis of the Province of Diyarbakır during Ottoman Governance (1516-1838)], *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 10, no. 1 (2000): 250-251, 260.

<sup>74</sup> BBA HAT 243/12110, 29 Rebiyülevvel 1229/21 March 1814.

the loyalties of elites who held *yurtluk-ocaklık* lands by assuring them of the central government's commitment to their semiautonomy and enlist their support against rival *valis* and an inscrutable Iran, in the event that it attacked. In 1813, the Ottomans secured a strong alliance with Selim Paşa in Muş,<sup>75</sup> whom they had appointed *mutasarrıf* in 1811 to replace his uncle Yusuf Paşa.<sup>76</sup>

Securing control over Beyazıt was a more difficult process for the Ottomans than Muş because of a power struggle between the descendants of İshak Paşa. When his son Mahmud Paşa was appointed by the Ottomans to be the *mutasarrıf*, his brothers complained of unfair distribution of power and wealth.<sup>77</sup> When Mahmud Paşa died in 1806, the Ottomans divided the domains of Beyazıt by appointing İshak Paşa's son İbrahim Paşa to be the new *mutasarrıf* of Eleşkirt and Beyazıt, while Mehmed Behlül Paşa (hereafter known as Behlül Paşa), the grandson of İshak Paşa and nephew of İbrahim Paşa, was appointed *mutasarrıf* of Diyadin.<sup>78</sup> The following year İbrahim Paşa was declared unfit for rule and the entirety of the Beyazıt *yurtluk-ocaklık* lands, including Eleşkirt, Diyadin, and Beyazıt, were given to Behlül Paşa.<sup>79</sup>

Although public opinion of İbrahim and Behlül appeared to be divided in the region, the Ottoman state was more suspicious of İbrahim, who was amassing the power of Kurdish groups in Iran and Eleşkirt, than Behlül. In 1815, İbrahim Paşa mobilized a

---

<sup>75</sup> BBA, HAT 1227/47922, 29 Zilkade 1228/23 December 1813

<sup>76</sup> Ottoman officials cited his indebtedness and corruption as the main reasons for his deposition. BBA, HAT 520/25422, 29 Zilkade 1225/25 January 1811.

<sup>77</sup> For İshak Paşa's death see BOA, C.DH. 469/19071, 14 Sefer 1215/7 July 1800; BBA, C.ML. 758/30886, 7 Cemaziyülevvel 1215/26 September 1800; BBA, C.ML. 571/23356, 29 Sefer 1221/18 May 1806.

<sup>78</sup> BBA, HAT 106/4201, 11 Safer 1221/30 April 1806.

<sup>79</sup> BBA, HAT 1364/53898, 29 Zilkade 1222/27 February 1808.

force of about twelve thousand cavalry consisting of Kurdish groups from Khoy, Nahçevan, and Yerevan, to regain control of Beyazıt, which had put placed under the control of Behlül Paşa. His strength was such that he managed to push back forces mobilized by the *vali* of Erzurum.<sup>80</sup> İbrahim Paşa also attempted to besiege the fortress of Beyazıt in 1817 by rallying together tribes in Yerevan, Diyadin and Eleşkirt. Yet Behlül Paşa was able to fend off his advances with the help of Ali Paşa, the *muhafız* of Kars.<sup>81</sup>

Unrest in the Balkans between 1813 and 1817, particularly in Serbia where Prince Miloş Obreniviç led a large uprising against the Ottoman state, diverted the locus of Sultan Mahmud II's centralization drive away from Eastern Anatolia for a period. Yet the growth of the conflict between Derviş Paşa and elites in Hakkari and Muş drew the Ottoman state administration to intervene.

Derviş Paşa's rule in Van had arguably never been deeply rooted. However, the circle of followers that Derviş had gathered around himself was strong enough to suppress local revolts, nullify the rulings of the state judiciary, and enforce his policies, albeit with brutal tactics. Derviş Paşa had faced opposition since he took control of the Van *eyâlet* in 1806, but by 1815 opponents to his rule had grown in number and organizational capacity. Sensing greater threat to his political position, Derviş Paşa embarked on a murderous campaign against the opposition, targeting not only overt

---

<sup>80</sup> General Major Rtishcheva to Privy Councilor Vedemeyer, 15 September 1815, cited in Pyotr Ivanovich Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii s Persyei i Turtsiyei v Techenie XIX Stoletiya* [The Kurds in the Wars of Russia with Persia and Turkey During the Nineteenth Century] (Tiflis: Izd. Otdela Generalnovo Shtaba pri Shtabe Kavkazskovo Voennovo Okruga, 1900), 1: 43-44.

<sup>81</sup> BBA, C.AS. 222/9434, 21 Rebiyülahir 1232/10 March 1817.

opposition members, but also their families. More than four thousand fled Van taking refuge in Iran and the mountains of Hakkari. Derviş Paşa's forces pursued them out of fear that they would build alliances with outside rival leaders, build their forces, and come back to besiege Van. Derviş Paşa also forged an alliance with the seminomadic Kurdish Sipki tribal confederacy who dwelled in Iran but migrated back and forth between the Iranian and Ottoman borders to find pasturage for their flocks and shelter during the harsh winters.

Derviş's attempts to penetrate the Iranian border was met with pushback from the Iranian government, who took Satmanis fortress, located near Mahmudi in Ottoman territory, in retaliation and as prevention against further forays. Skirmishes between Iranian leader Feth Ali Khan's forces and those of Derviş Paşa ensued with neither side making significant gains.<sup>82</sup> Remarkably, despite Iran's incursions into Ottoman territory, Sultan Mahmud II, occupied with the revolt in Serbia, simply had the *vali* of Erzurum dispatch Derviş to fend off further incursions and then ask him to step down in 1816, which Derviş refused to do.

The conflict between local leaders in Van escalated in 1817 when the *bey* of Hakkari, Mustafa Bey, sought the protection of the Iranian government against Derviş Paşa's reprisals by offering to become an Iranian subject (*tebaiyyet*) along with those living in his domain.<sup>83</sup> In response, Sultan Mahmud and the *vali* of Erzurum wrote the *vali* of Maraş and Selim Bey, the *mutasarrıf* of Muş, requesting their military support to help the state oust Derviş and install a new Ottoman *vali* in Van. Derviş Paşa amassed

---

<sup>82</sup> BBA, HAT 799/37054, 23 Rebiyülevvel 1230/5 March 1815.

<sup>83</sup> Selim Paşa of Muş to the *vali* of Erzurum, BBA, HAT 452/22929/A, 29 Şaban 1232/14 July 1817.

approximately thirty to forty thousand troops to push back against the Ottomans. He also armed and organized members of the Sıpkı tribal confederacy whom he encouraged to drive into Erciş and Bulanık, territory held by Selim Paşa of Muş, escalating the already heated conflict between Derviş Paşa and Selim.

Numbered among local allies of the state were İbrahim Yümni Paşa, a local leader of the Van region, members of the Şikaki tribal confederacy (likely rivals of the Sipki tribal confederacy, the *bey* of Mahmudi, and Selim Paşa of Muş who muster enough force to storm the city of Van in December of 1818. In anticipation of being overwhelmed, Derviş Paşa fled with his supporters to Erçek, a mountainous enclave located east of Van. Accompanying Derviş were local *ağas*, the janissary leader Mustafa Ağa, and his Armenian financier, Sarraf Agop. However, it is unclear how many Armenians supported Derviş Paşa. Yet it is highly unlikely that Armenians who supported Derviş sought any sort of ethnic based independence. As Derviş Paşa and his entourage were unwelcome guests in many areas, he was forced to relocate to a number of different places and resorted to attacking supporters of Selim Paşa. In response Selim Paşa of Muş led his forces to take back Adilcevaz and Bulanık, which had been captured by the Sipki tribe.<sup>84</sup>

Upon the untimely death of the *vali* of Erzurum in early 1819, Derviş Paşa led his contingents to storm Van and take it back. The new rise of Derviş Paşa emboldened opponents of İbrahim Yümni Paşa in the city of Van to rise up against him and usher Derviş back into the city. Fearing capture and torture, İbrahim Yümni Paşa committed suicide. Yet with the appointment of a new *vali* of Erzurum, Hafız Ali Paşa, the

---

<sup>84</sup> Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet* (Istanbul: Matbaa-yı Amire, 1854), 11: 64-65.

Ottomans were able restore some order among their forces and advance once again on Van. In a letter to Derviş Paşa, Hafız Ali promised to preserve his life, only exiling him to a distant island, and allow him to keep his wealth in exchange for a peaceful surrender. However, Derviş Paşa refused and continued his siege of Van. Ottoman forces entered the city in August, 1819. Derviş tried to flee but was captured and executed two days later.

Between 1813 and 1818 Diyarbakır was under greater Ottoman control than was Van. Sultan Mahmud II regularly rotated the *valis* between every six to twelve months and appointed members of the city's elite Şeyhzade family to positions of political power in order to keep them content.<sup>85</sup> During his journey to Diyarbakır in 1816, James Silk Buckingham, a British traveler, writes that the *vali* "Kullendar" (Kalendar Paşa) was under the direct command of Sublime Porte, and kept peace in the city with a force of about one thousand Turkish and Albanian soldiers. He writes that although Kalendar Paşa had a reputation for being "severe," that "judging from external appearances, there [were] few towns in which there seem to be more of personal liberty, competence, and comfort among all classes of people."<sup>86</sup> Between 1816 and 1817 Abdulgani Bulduk writes that the relations between the Ottoman *valis* and locals were quite peaceful.<sup>87</sup>

Yet during the winter and spring months of 1819, unrest began brewing between the local population and central government officials. To quell the unrest and restore order in the city, the Ottomans appointed Behram Paşa, a member of the Milan tribe, who

---

<sup>85</sup> İbrahim Yılmazçelik, "Osmanlı Hakimiyeti Süresince Diyarbakır Eyaleti Valileri," 250-251.

<sup>86</sup> James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia* (London: Henry Colburn, New Burlington Street, 1827), 1: 381-382.

<sup>87</sup> Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır*, 255.

was supposedly involved in a longstanding rivalry with the Şeyhzade family.<sup>88</sup> However, it is unclear how much the personal rivalry in and of itself explains the roots of the catastrophe that was to follow. What is clear, however, is that Şeyhzade Mehmed Paşa feared the future security of his role in the Diyarbakır administration and established ties with a number of local merchants and *ulema* whom he convinced were at risk from the central government. According to Ahmet Cevdet Paşa's history, Behram Paşa announced only three days after his arrival to Diyarbakır as the *vali* that he would "kill, banish, and burn the property" of dissenters.<sup>89</sup> However, Behram had miscalculated the degree of local supporters that the dissenters had, for they overwhelmed his security forces and forced him to take refuge inside the citadel, where they held him prisoner for 101 days.<sup>90</sup>

The incident alarmed the central government who sent reinforcements in from neighboring provinces to disperse the rebels and free Behram Paşa. The rebels were able to fend them off at the city's gates for a number of weeks until late October when government forces poured into Diyarbakır and dealt a large blow to the rebels. Nearly one third of the inhabitants of the city suffered casualties and seven to eight hundred families were exiled,<sup>91</sup> including Şeyhzade Mehmed Bey, janissary leader İskenderzâde Öksüz Hacı Mustafa, the city's *mufti* Mesut Efendi, and a number of merchants and traders. The Ottoman army's siege on Diyarbakır ravaged the local economy. Five years after the incident, all exiles were allowed to return.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Salzmänn, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire*, 192.

<sup>89</sup> Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, 11: 67.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-68.

<sup>91</sup> Salzmänn, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire*, 193.

<sup>92</sup> Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır*, 253.



### 1821-1823 Ottoman-Iranian War and its Aftermath

The Ottoman Empire's centralization efforts in Eastern Anatolia were brought to a halt in 1821 because it was facing great political instability on both its eastern and western fronts. Greek rebels in the Peloponnese had risen up to fight the state, and rebels in Montenegro drove the Turks from the valley of Zeta. The Ottomans also battled Abdullah Pasha to maintain control over the fortress of Akko and put down resistance by the *valis* of Damascus and Aleppo. In the east many Iranian Kurds, backed by the Qajar government, continued their raids of the Empire via Beyazıt and Van.<sup>93</sup>

A number of factors led to the decision of Iran to invade the Ottoman Empire. First Ottoman special forces went into Iranian territory to kidnap and behead a formerly high-ranking Turkish official who had been deposed on charges of treason and taken refuge in Iran.<sup>94</sup> Second the *vali* of Erzurum had failed to contain local nomadic Kurdish populations from undertaking raids in Iranian territory which provoked great discontent among Iranian Kurds. Third Shi'i pilgrims' continual complaints of persecution by both Sunnis and Ottoman officials during their treks to the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala led the Iranians to submit continual complaints to the sultan, whom they believed was not properly responding to the matter.

Iran commenced their push into Ottoman territory by moving one military division towards Baghdad in the south and one division towards Erzurum in the north. In November 1821 Hasan Khan Qajar took Toprakkale on the border near Beyazıt which he used as a base to launch assaults on a number of strategic Ottoman-held towns to the west

---

<sup>93</sup> These raids had been occurring at the behest of Abbas Mirza since Iran made peace with Russian under the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813.

<sup>94</sup> Williamson, "The Turko-Persian War 1821-1823," 88.

all the way to Erciş.<sup>95</sup> He was unable to hold them for long due to a combination of pushback from local Kurdish and Ottoman forces who outnumbered them almost two to one.<sup>96</sup> The Ottomans took many Iranian prisoners.

Although the Ottomans were able to push back Iran, in part due to a particularly harsh winter, they were greatly alarmed and undertook to rearrange administrative posts in the region. In December 1821 the Ottomans exiled the *vali* of Trabzon Salih Paşa to Tokat, because of a number of complaints that locals lodged against him, and replaced him with the then *vali* of Erzurum Hüsrev Paşa. Mehmet Emin Rauf Paşa was appointed *vali* of Erzurum in his stead. The Ottomans chose him on account of his knowledge of the terrain and military experience. Rauf Paşa appointed Cabbarzade Mahmut Celalettin Paşa, the *mutasarrıf* of Muş, to administer over five *kazas* and six *livas* in Rauf Paşa's domain. They also reinforced Kars sending the *muhafız* Osman Paşa 2-3,000 foot soldiers, four howitzer canons, and ammunition. The Ottomans tightly supervised all movement in the region. No soldiers commissioned to Kars were to be sent elsewhere. Traders moving between Iran and the Ottoman Empire were stopped.<sup>97</sup>

In the summer of 1822 Hüseyin Khan, the Persian military commander at Yerevan, took his force composed of one thousand regular regiments, two thousand riflemen (*tufangi*), and two thousand Kurdish cavalry and launched another offensive.<sup>98</sup> He managed to take Eleşkirt and advance his armies towards Bulanık, Hınıs, Varto

---

<sup>95</sup> BBA, HAT 815/37286, 21 Sefer 1237/17 November 1821; Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, 12: 11.

<sup>96</sup> Williamson, "The Turko-Persian War 1821-1823," 95-96.

<sup>97</sup> BBA, HAT 822/37385, 3 Cemaziyülevvel 1237/26 January 1822; BBA, HAT 822/37385E 13 Rebiyülahır 1237/7 January 1822.

<sup>98</sup> James Baillie Fraser, *Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan in the Years 1821 and 1822* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), 227.

(located northeast of Muş), and Muş. Hüseyin Khan wrote Osman Paşa of Kars demanding a prisoner exchange.<sup>99</sup> Yet in spite of the Osman's compliance the Iranians continued to advance into Ottoman territory. Their progress was slowed towards the end of the summer because of an outbreak of an epidemic that sickened and killed many soldiers.<sup>100</sup>

The Ottomans managed to maintain the loyalty and support of Mahmud Paşa at Van and Selim Paşa at Muş. Although he was rumored to have proclaimed his allegiance to the Iranians during Iran's initial invasion of Muş,<sup>101</sup> Selim Paşa of Muş was a powerful and useful ally for the Ottomans. During the 1810s he managed to expand his political domain into Bitlis, Hınıs, and Malazgird. During the 1821-1823 Ottoman-Persian war he managed to mobilize a force of some 25,000 and keep the Persians from penetrating the Muş region.<sup>102</sup> The Persians were also aware of his prowess and large number of followers. Hasan Khan even offered to "change Selim's name from Pasha to Khan," implying that he sought to grant him a political privilege that would exceed that granted to him by the Ottoman Empire if he defected to Iran. However, Selim declined maintaining his loyalty to the Ottomans and settled for a prisoner exchange.<sup>103</sup>

The loyalty of the Kurds in Beyazıt was divided between Iran and the Ottoman Empire during the war. Behlül Paşa sided with the Ottoman Empire while Abdülhamid

---

<sup>99</sup> BBA, HAT 770/36179Ö, 3 Zilhicce 1237/21 August 1822; Simeon, ed., *Divan Patmutyun Hayots*, 10: 516.

<sup>100</sup> BBA, HAT 771/36183/E, 29 Zilhicce 1237/16 September 1822; Mehmet Ali Furugi, 42.

<sup>101</sup> Erzurum *vali* Hüsrev Paşa to Grand Vizier Hacı Salih Paşa, BBA, HAT 826/37442/A, 24 Sefer 1237/20 November 1821.

<sup>102</sup> Williamson, "The Turko-Persian War 1821-1823," 96.

<sup>103</sup> Simeon, ed., *Divan Patmutyun Hayots*, 10: 516.

Paşa sided with the Iranians. Just before Iran captured Beyazıt, the Ottomans had tried to install Abdülhamid Paşa as the *mutasarrıf* and oust Behlül Paşa, on suspicion that the latter would side with the Iranians. Behlül Paşa's refusal to leave his position by taking refuge inside the fortress fueled Ottoman suspicion even more. He was eventually captured by the Ottoman forces and detained in Erzurum.<sup>104</sup> To the chagrin of the Ottomans Abdülhamid defected to the Iranian side in the summer of 1821, perhaps in anticipation that they would soon take the city.<sup>105</sup> The Ottomans rewarded Behlül for helping take back Beyazıt by reappointing him to the position of *mutasarrıf* after the war.

With conflict escalating in Greece, the Ottomans desperately sought to put an end to the war on their eastern front with Iran. Britain also favored a truce; however, provincial governors kept demanding more military provisions to fight off a persistent Iranian onslaught. The Ottomans attempted to coerce the Iranians into a truce by temporarily imprisoning Iranian visitors and traders and confiscating their wealth, hoping to inflict some economic damage to Iran. This also led many Iranian merchants to demand peace. Feeling the economic atrophy of the Ottomans' policy and unable to take more land to compensate for economic losses, Feth Ali Shah was forced to call a truce in 1823. In June the *vali* of Erzurum Rauf Paşa met with Iranian representative Muhammad Ali Mirza to sign a peace treaty at Erzurum.<sup>106</sup>

According to clause one of the treaty, neither Iran nor the Ottoman state was to interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Iran was not to try to prop up or appoint governors in Baghdad or any region in Kurdistan. Groups crossing the border to find

---

<sup>104</sup> BBA, HAT 825/37415, 1 Recep 1236/4 April 1821.

<sup>105</sup> BBA, HAT 767/36133, 7 Ramazan 1236/8 June 1821.

<sup>106</sup> BBA, HAT 781/36595A, 27 Şevval 1238/7 July 1823.

pasture for their flocks (*yaylak*) or to find a dwelling place for the winter (*kışlak*) were to pay a *yaylak* or *kışlak* fee. If a dispute arose that involved parties who lived on both sides of the border, Iranian and Ottoman political officials were to meet to come up with solutions for its resolution. Article 2 of the treaty stipulated that Iranian pilgrims to the holy Muslim shrines in Najaf and Karbala and in Mecca and Medina be given protection by the Ottomans.

Articles 3 and 4 sought to restrict border crossing to a much greater degree. Article 3 stipulated that if members of the large Kurdish tribal confederations the Haydaranlı and Sıpkı tribes clashed across borders, that offenders be apprehended and taken to either Ottoman or Iranian authorities depending on their place of origin. The Ottoman Empire was to allow passage to members of combative groups who desired to pass into Iran. However, if they sought reentry into the Ottoman Empire, they were to be strictly forbidden. The Iranian border authority was to forbid groups seeking to enter the Ottoman Empire from passage. Article 4 stipulated that no state was to host political refugees.<sup>107</sup>

The overall effect of the Treaty of Erzurum in 1823 was positive for the Ottoman Empire's centralization project in Eastern Anatolia. It helped make the border somewhat less porous than it had been before. It further relieved them of the Iranian threat to a greater degree allowing them to focus their energies on containing the power of Kurdish groups. However, it was an overall loss for the Kurds in the region. The increased border security disrupted the cross-border transmigrations on which they relied for economic sustenance. The effects of the war had also hurt the local economy, and the

---

<sup>107</sup> BBA, A.DVNS.DVE.D 43-1, 1-5; Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, 12: 228-234.

Kurdish groups bore the responsibility of economic reconstruction, which they struggled to achieve, to a great degree. The experiences of the Kurds with the Ottoman Empire during the 1821-1823 war embittered many of them towards the sultan and may have been a contributing factor in their reluctance to support the Ottomans during the 1828-1829 war with Russia. The impact of the war on the Armenians was negative. Many of them were taken prisoner by the Iranians along with their Kurdish neighbors.<sup>108</sup> The Ottoman patriarch of Istanbul, Boghos I, ordered Armenians in the empire to stand down and not rebel against the Ottomans.<sup>109</sup> However, since Armenian groups had no political aspirations with the Iranians, the war had a neutral effect on their overall relationships with the Muslims.

The war eliminated Behlül Paşa's competitors for the *mutasarrıflık* of Beyazıt, allowing him to strengthen his control therein. Since the Ottomans were weakened by the war, they continued to tolerate his strong position in the crucial border *sancak*. In spite of occasional hints of suspicion from the central administration towards Behlül Paşa, the *bey* of Beyazıt remained an important ally to the sultan until his death in 1854. This is significant given the fact that many Kurdish elites near the Ottoman-Russian border leaned toward the Russians during the 1828-1829 war and rose in rebellion to the Ottoman state in the 1830s and 1840s.

Between 1823 and 1828, there was a division in the house of Alaeddin. Selim Paşa competed with another member in his family for power. Selim Paşa, accused of

---

<sup>108</sup> Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyun*, 37.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

betraying the sultan, was pursued by the sultan's men. He fled Muş in late 1826.<sup>110</sup> Although he was able to avoid arrest for a number of months by taking refuge in the mountains between Bitlis and Diyarbakır, he was eventually captured in the spring of 1827. He died while being escorted by Ottoman officers to en route to Sivas, probably because someone killed him.<sup>111</sup> He was replaced by his brother Abdurrahman, who had gained the trust of the Ottomans in the same year.<sup>112</sup> This, however, did not put an end to the interfamily rivalries in Muş. Emin Bey, the son of Yusuf Paşa and his brothers killed Abdurrahman only months after he was appointed *mutasarrıf*.<sup>113</sup> Fearing reprisal from Ottoman authorities Emin fled with his brothers to Diyarbakır, where the Ottoman authorities did eventually catch them. However, since the state authorities believed Emin Bey to be the strongest of the beys in Muş, they forgave his indiscretions, made him *mutasarrıf* of Muş, and bestowed upon him the title of *paşa*.<sup>114</sup> During the interfamily rivalry, competing family members tried to sell the positions of bishop of Surp Garabet to the Armenians in order to raise money to attract Kurdish followers to defeat the competition. Bishop Bedros notes that when the Ottomans “started to gain control over the Kurds...the [Armenian] people were freed from this unbearable yoke.”<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Erzurum *vali* Salih Paşa to Grand Vizier Benderli Mehmed Selim Paşa, BBA, HAT 735/34885, 3 Cemaziyülevvel 1242/3 December 1826.

<sup>111</sup> BBA, HAT 892/39382, 25 Safer 1243/17 September 1827.

<sup>112</sup> BBA, HAT 768/36159, enc. 4, 3 Safer 1243/26 August 1827.

<sup>113</sup> BBA, HAT 1088/44264, enc. 9, 17 Şevval/2 May 1828.

<sup>114</sup> Diyarbakır *vali* Mehmed Salih Paşa to state treasurer, BBA, C.DH. 29 Zilkade 1243/12 June 1828.

<sup>115</sup> Agheksander Palchean, *Kavazanakirk: Hachortutyun Vanaharts Ukhdis Surp Garabet Taronoy* [Chronology of Prelates: Consecration of the Holy Order of St. Garabet of Taron] (Jerusalem: Tparani Arak, Atorroy Surp Hagobyants, 1912), 99-100.

### The 1828-1829 Russo-Ottoman War

Despite suffering a major naval defeat (the battle of Navarino) at the hands of Russia, France, and Britain in 1827, Sultan Mahmud II continued to defy the demands of the Great Powers to recognize the independence of Greece and Russia's demand to restore privileges to Wallachia and Moldavia. It was a heady move on the part of the sultan, who was under the false impression that he had achieved a strong enough political and military position to fight the Russians. Only three months after ending its war with Iran, Russia declared war on the Ottomans in April 1828. Initially the Ottomans welcomed the war as an opportunity to settle the score the Russians over their claims to the Straits and limit their influence on the Black Sea and in the Balkans. Yet, with his military still in the process of reorganization, the sultan found himself ill-prepared to confront the Czar's armies. Mahmud II had been bracing himself for a standoff with the Russians in the Balkans and may have expected them to try to expand themselves further on the northern shores of the Black Sea (i.e., Anapa, which the Russians took on May 15). However, Russia's march on Kars in June, 1828 came as a surprise. Frank Russell notes that Ottoman unawareness of Russian intrigues was to the extent that on the eve of the Russian invasion of Eastern Anatolia, the *mutasarrif* of Kars allowed traders to cross the border into Russia and sell their grain on the Georgian markets thereby indirectly provisioning the Russian military.<sup>116</sup>

It is not exactly clear why the Ottomans were caught off guard on their eastern front. For one they had informants from Iran tipping them off about Russia's intent to

---

<sup>116</sup> Frank Russell, *Russian Wars with Turkey* (London: H.S. King & Co., 1877), 159.



push into the Ottomans' eastern flank during the Russo-Iranian war.<sup>117</sup> One explanation for the lack of preparation against a Russian offensive from the Caucasus is that the Ottomans, having been in conflict in Iran most recently, believed Fath Ali Shah to be the greater threat than the Czar. Lieutenant-General William Monteith, who was in Tiflis and Iran in 1828 and 1829 overseeing a settlement between the Russians and the Persians,<sup>118</sup> subscribes to this view and writes, "the Turkish government appeared to view the humiliation of Persia [as a result of the Russo-Persian War 1826-1828] with satisfaction, little imagining it would tend to their own discomfiture."<sup>119</sup> Also given the fact that Russia had mostly left the Ottomans alone on their eastern front during the 1806-1812 Russo-Ottoman war, and given the fact that the Russians were still in full control over their newly conquered territories in the Caucasus and had not yet fully settled matters with Iran, it seemed reasonable to expect that Russia would not launch a full-scale invasion into the rugged mountainous territories of Kars and Ardahan.<sup>120</sup> Another reason that the Ottomans were caught off guard is that the Russians appeared unprepared

---

<sup>117</sup> For instance, in early February 1828, while the Russians were in the process of drafting what would become the Treaty of Turkmenchay, Ali Khan in Maku informed Behlül Paşa, the *mutasarrıf* of Beyazıt, who then informed the sultan, that the Russians were arming men in the Maku region with the intent of attempting to hold it in their possession. BBA, HAT 1091/44298/H, 23 Recep 1243/9 February 1828. Continued Russian interest in Maku can be confirmed in a letter dated October 26, 1828 from Colonel Skalon, the head of the general staff of the Russian army in Kishinev. See Bournoutian, ed., *Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia*, 305-306.

<sup>118</sup> For additional information on William Monteith see Charles Edward Buckland, ed., *Dictionary of Indian Biography* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1906), 297.

<sup>119</sup> William Monteith, *Kars and Erzeroum* (London, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1856), 156-157.

<sup>120</sup> As a result of the Treaty of Turkmenchay, signed February 1828, Russia gained a large degree of political leverage over Iran, who was forced to pay a burdensome indemnity, allow Russia to place consular officials anywhere in Qajar-held territory, and cede full naval control of the Caspian to Russia. See Atkin, *Russia and Iran*, 158-159.

for battle, with many of their soldiers still returning from Iran.<sup>121</sup>

The Russians assembled troops in Gyumri in late May, 1828 and took Kars the next month. After recovering from an outbreak of disease in late June and early July, the Russians proceeded to take Akhalkalak, Ahıska (Akhaltsikhe), Atskhur, and Ardahan in the north, and Beyazıt, Toprakkale, and Diadin in the south between July and September. The Russians owed the success of their campaigns in 1828 largely to Armenian and Azerbaijani militia members (*opolchentsa*), especially in the battle of Beyazıt in late August where they drove a militia of irregulars out of the citadel and helped take and secure prisoners.<sup>122</sup> In October, Prince Chavchavadze, an ethnic Georgian, who was in command of the force penetrating southward, undertook a reconnaissance mission to the region just north of Lake Van, reaching as far as Patnos, and were on their way to Malazgirt, but decided to retreat with his troops back to Beyazıt when forces of Kurdish irregulars, led by Emin Paşa of Muş and Abdurrezzak Paşa (the brother of the toppled Paşa of Beyazıt, Behlül Paşa) began approaching them.<sup>123</sup>

Feeling emboldened by the success of his campaign in 1828, Prince Paskevich expressed his desire in November of the same year to penetrate Anatolia as far as Sivas in the north and Diyarbakır in the south to be able to force the Ottoman army to take on two fronts.<sup>124</sup> Combat resumed in January 1829 when the sultan called upon his subjects to wage a *jihad* against the Russians. Between January and June he had his generals lead a

---

<sup>121</sup> Averyanov acknowledges that when the war began on the Ottoman's eastern front that the Russian armies were unprepared for combat. Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 25-26, 47-48.

<sup>122</sup> Ibrahimbeyli, *Rossiya i Azerbaijan v Pervoy Treti XIX Veka*, 133.

<sup>123</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 55-58.

<sup>124</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 59.

force of 80,000 to try to retake Kars and Akhaltsikhe, and another force of 50,000 under the command of Emin Paşa of Muş and İshak Paşa of Van to try to retake Beyazıt, held by a force of 2,000 Russians and 1,000 Armenians.<sup>125</sup> However, in June the Russians won a crucial set of battles against the Ottomans who were trying to take back Akhaltsikhe, thus clearing the path for them to resume moving deeper into Ottoman territory. General Paskevich took Erzurum on July 8, 1829, and Hınıs and Bayburt a week later.

İshak Paşa of Van moved his forces into Beyazıt and was able to capture all except for the citadel. He retreated upon notice that Erzurum had fallen.<sup>126</sup> The Paşa of Van charged again in late July, hoping that the Russians were thinned out and stricken by disease. However, he was still held off by Paskevich. Kurds remained on the path between Van and Beyazıt sending in people to raid Armenian villages in the Beyazıt region.<sup>127</sup> The Russians were pressured by their European allies and foes to fully halt their military operations against the Ottomans by mid-September and sign the Treaty of Edirne. Under the treaty, the sultan was to recognize Russia's acquisitions in the Caucasus (Akhaltsikhe, Ahıska, Nahçıvan, and Yerevan) and concede increased trading rights to her in the Black Sea and on the Danube River. The Russians were careful to not demand too many territorial acquisitions lest they disrupt the balance of power in Europe and provoke Britain, Austria, and/or France to declare war on them. Hence, they returned

---

<sup>125</sup> Russell, *Russian Wars with Turkey*, 165; Monteith, *Kars and Erzeroum*, 273. According to Ottoman intelligence, the Russians were at that point also trying to forge an alliance with the Zılanlı and Sıpkı tribes who lived predominantly around Yerevan and Maku, respectively, and recruit the Armenians in the Beyazıt to the military. BBA, HAT 1029/42833/D, 4 Recep 1244/10 January 1829.

<sup>126</sup> Russell, *Russian Wars with Turkey*, 172; Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 74.

<sup>127</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 74.

Kars, Beyazıt, and Erzurum to the Ottomans.

While Russia officials politicized religious and ethnic identity in the Balkans, encouraging the Greeks and Serbs to demand autonomy and promoted themselves as protectors of Orthodox Christians against Muslim oppressors, they pursued a much different policy in Eastern Anatolia. Since Muslims greatly outnumbered Christians throughout the southern Caucasus and northeastern Anatolia, they tended not to promote the idea of religious protection and freedom as a means of inciting Eastern Anatolians to revolt against the Ottomans. Instead, the Russians promoted the idea of they were more capable of the Ottomans in bringing about security, order, and economic progress in the region.

Prince Paskevich was cautious to not appear as a Christian liberator, but as a liberator from insecurity. After Kars surrendered to Prince Paskevich's forces in late June 1828, Paskevich established a council to administer the town which consisted of a Circassian chief Prince Beckowitz, the *mufti*, the *kadi*, and some principal inhabitants who were both Armenian and Muslim, and two Russians. The police force continued as it did before and the Christians reportedly did not complain against the administration.<sup>128</sup> Prince Paskevich was also critical of political activist Bishop Nerses Ashtaraketsi for his austere policies against the Muslims in Yerevan, since it made it difficult to secure alliances among many elites of the local Zilanlı tribe in the region.<sup>129</sup>

Russia had also learned from the earlier wars that the Muslim and non-Muslim Kurdish groups in many regions were not necessarily enthused supporters of either

---

<sup>128</sup> Monteith, *Kars and Erzeroum*, 166-167.

<sup>129</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 46.

regime. Russian observers noted that during their campaigns in Caucasus between 1804 and 1813 although many of the local Kurdish populations did not side with the Russians, they were reluctant to wage full resistance against their campaign.<sup>130</sup> Seeing that the Kurds did not always have a deeply rooted religious or ethnic connection to their Muslim overlords, they either tried to persuade them through political promises or coerce them through threats to side with them against the Ottomans and Iranians.

After the Russians declared war and won a few key battles against the Ottomans, they found an increasing number of Kurds submitted to them, promised neutrality, or even offered to accept an alliance with them. The *bey* of Hakkari declared his neutrality right upon the outbreak of war.<sup>131</sup> The Yezidi Kurds at Beyazıt submitted very quickly to the Russians at the battle of Beyazıt in mid-1828. Hassan Ağa, a prominent leader in the Kurdish Zilanlı tribe (who dwelled predominantly around Yerevan), allied with the Russians. Not all members of the Zilanlı tribe accepted an alliance with Russia, many fled across the Ottoman border.<sup>132</sup> By early 1829, the Russians had four Muslim regiments formed primarily from the populations of Kars and Akhaltsikhe – one regiment was entirely Kurdish while another consisted largely of Yezidi Kurds led by Hassan Ağa.<sup>133</sup>

Behlül Paşa, the *mutasarrıf* of Beyazıt, also appeared to entertain the idea of an alliance with the Russians, in order to preserve his status and his life. According to Averyanov, Behlül Paşa did commit to helping the Russians and only appeared to be

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 1: 25-26.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 1: 45.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 1: 46; BBA, HAT 1029/42833/D, 4 Recep 1244, 10 January 1829.

<sup>133</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 46

fighting on the Ottoman side in order to avoid reprisals against him by Ottoman loyalists under his command. He was taken into protective custody by the Russian forces after they defeated the weakly assembled Ottoman force.<sup>134</sup> A memo from General Williams confirms that Behlül Paşa was trying to playing both the Ottoman and Russian sides to his advantage:

This is the second pasha who has been taken in this manner; Bahlool Pash, the hereditary chief of Bayazid, having fallen into the enemy's hands near Euch-Kelissa [Üçkilise], about two months ago. I should state to your lordship that, by Prince Paskiewitch's official reports on the last war, this very Bahlool Pasha allowed himself to be taken prisoner in Bayazid, and, while in the enemy's hands, exerted himself as an active partizan [*sic*] in their favour by intriguing with and rendering neutral several of the sultan's Turkish subjects. The similarity of the game played and playing by this man forces me to bring him to your excellency's notice; the more so as several of the Kurdish bands of horse under Veli Pasha, during the recent unsuccessful operations of the Russian general-in-chief against Erzerum, disbanded and fled to their homes without firing a shot.<sup>135</sup>

Kurdish groups further from the Ottoman-Russian border were often more wary of an alliance with Russia, but not completely opposed to the idea. After Prince Chavchavadze withdrew his troops from Patnos, he managed to secure an agreement with Emin Paşa of Muş, who had helped the Ottomans drive him from the region, to maintain neutrality. This dealt a major blow to the Ottomans who were deprived of some 12,000 irregular cavalry under the command of Emin Paşa as a result.<sup>136</sup> In December 1828, after the Russians had advanced deeper into Ottoman territory, Emin Paşa sent an Armenian to Tiflis to inform the Russian commander that he was willing to avail them of

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 1: 48-49, 51.

<sup>135</sup> General Williams to the Foreign-office, September 19, 1829, cited in Edward Henry Nolan, ed., *The History of the War Against Russia* (London: Virtue, 1856), 509.

<sup>136</sup> Monteith, *Kars and Erzeroum*, 262.

his services. Emin Paşa's uncle, Ibrahim Bey, also met with the Russians in July 1829.<sup>137</sup>

In time, Emin Paşa proved to be a fickle opportunist who played the Ottomans and the Russians to his advantage. Emin Paşa withdrew his support from the Russians by the time they captured Erzurum in mid-1829. Around the same time, other Kurds who had had hinted at either surrendering to the Russians or entering into an alliance with them also made an about face. According to a letter that General Paskevich wrote in late July, the reason that these Kurdish groups did not maintain their loyalty to the Russians was that they heard that the British and French were coming to Istanbul and would not allow the Russians to hold the east. Hence, they avoided the appearance of any loyalty to the Russians and figured that their lands would soon be returned to them.<sup>138</sup> In September 1829, the Russians managed to advance on Muş, where they sought to punish Emin Paşa for his duplicity and replace him with Ibrahim Bey, who appeared to be more loyal to the Russians. However, with the Treaty of Edirne stipulating Russian retreat, this plan never came to fruition.<sup>139</sup>

During the war, the seeds of ethnic conflict were sown among local inhabitants. Emin Paşa ordered that Armenian villages be plundered in order to raise resources to be able to fight against the Russians, whom the Ottoman authorities had obligated him to fight. According to a letter by a monk in the Surp Garabet monastery, Emin Paşa had developed a contingency plan in the event that the Russians stormed Muş, which involved plundering Armenian villages and fleeing west. The Armenians were said to

---

<sup>137</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 60-65.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 1: 75.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 1: 76; Şeyh Abdurrezzak to Demir Paşa, BBA, HAT 728/34650/I, 18 Rebiyülevvel, 17 September 1829.

have not resisted since they expected that Russia would soon occupy the region and that they would then become the new stewards of the lands evacuated by the Kurds. The monastery at St. Garabet was plundered and pillaged. However, after the war ended, Emin Paşa returned some belongings to the church, including their animals, in order to rebuild the monastery and make it a valuable source of income again. Guravtsi, the Armenian bishop of the monastery, tried to arraign and try Ömer Bey, a Kurd who had participated in robbing the church. However, Ömer had fled to Hınıs and local authorities did not try to apprehend him.<sup>140</sup>

İshak Paşa, the *muhafiz* of Van, also grew increasingly suspicious that the Armenians in Van would undermine Ottoman efforts to protect the city. In July 1829, he sent a note to the *vali* of Erzurum, Salih Paşa, informing him that he was arming the unarmed in Van, warning Iranian merchants and affiliates with the Haydaranlı tribe confederation from coordination, and “would not fail to punish Armenian traitors” (*Ermeni taifesinden hiyanet edeceklerin tecziyelerinde kusur edilmeyeceğine*).<sup>141</sup>

On the other hand, many Armenians aspired to liberate themselves from their Muslim overlords and persecuted Muslims in the regions that had come under Russian control. In 1828, Armenian vigilante groups in the rural areas throughout the Kars *sancak* were reported to have destroyed the homes of Muslims and deprived them of access to food and resources in order to force them to migrate.<sup>142</sup>

Some 100,000 Armenians from the *eyalets* of Van and Erzurum fled to Russian

---

<sup>140</sup> Sasuni, *Badmutyun Daroni Ashkharhi*, 178-183.

<sup>141</sup> BBA, HAT 1082/44107/Ç, 29 Zilhicce 1244/2 July 1829.

<sup>142</sup> Kemal Beydilli, “1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşında Doğu Anadolu’dan Rusya’ya Göçürülen Ermeniler” [Armenians Moved from Eastern Anatolia to Russia During the 1828-1829 Russo-Ottoman War], *Türk Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* 17, no. 1 (1988): 391.



territory during the war.<sup>143</sup> Many fled due to persecution or fear of attacks from neighboring Muslims and out of hope of finding a better life in Russia. However, a great many fled because of direct encouragement from the Russians and many of the Armenian priests to do so.<sup>144</sup> Russia pursued a similar policy of attracting Christians to migrate to the southern Caucasus during the 1826-1828 war with Iran.<sup>145</sup> Their aim was to create a majority Christian population in the region and thin out the Muslims there in order to maintain a foothold in the region and make it more difficult for the Ottomans or Iranians to regain control of the region by calling the Muslims to mobilize in the name of religion.

The Ottomans, by contrast, did not appear to favor a policy of ethnic or religious “thinning” in Eastern Anatolia, largely because the majority of the population was Muslim and they did not believe the Armenians to pose a significant threat. The sultan was actually opposed to the Czar’s policy of enticing Armenian migration, for fear that this policy would give Russia an upper hand in the Caucasus and make it difficult to control policy in his favor there. Furthermore, local Ottoman officials grew concerned that the mass exodus of Armenians from Ottoman lands would deprive them of a tax base and labor to till the fields and take care of the land. Hence, they often discouraged Armenian migration to Russia.<sup>146</sup>

Much like the Kurds, the Armenians were divided during the war. Armenians in

---

<sup>143</sup> Richard Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 9.

<sup>144</sup> Beydilli, “1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşında,” 407.

<sup>145</sup> Karl Friedrich Neuman, *Geschichte der Übersiedlung von vierzig tausend Armeniern, welche im Jahre 1828 aus der Persischen Provinz Aderbaidshan nach Rußland auswanderlen* [History of the Relocation of Forty Thousand Armenians in 1828 from the Persian Province Azerbaijan to Russia] (Leipzig: Weidman’sche Buchhandlung, 1834), 22-38.

<sup>146</sup> Beydilli, “1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşında,” 390-391.

the Caucasus around Yerevan and those at Beyazıt more strongly supported the Russians.<sup>147</sup> However, the Armenian patriarch at Istanbul and the Armenian elites around Van voiced their support for the Ottomans. The reason for this has to do with the fact that many of the Armenian peasants lacked political clout and figured their lot to be better in territory controlled by the Russians. By contrast, elite members of the Armenian clergy derived their wealth from a strong central Ottoman state and sought its continuation.

### Conclusion

The policy of decentralization that the Ottomans pursued in Eastern Anatolia throughout much of eighteenth century was a relatively effective strategy against Iranian intrigues. Through this policy, the Ottomans were able to incentivize peripheral Kurdish elites to maintain their loyalty to the sultan and free themselves of the need to divert precious human resources to build up a bureaucracy and a standing military there. Since the Iranians were in a state of internal disarray through much of the 1600s and 1700s, they had little to offer Kurdish *beys* in Ottoman territory in order to persuade them to defect. Furthermore, since the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia were largely Sunni Muslims, the Iranians' appeal to the idea of Shi'i protection had no effect on them.

Yet, the Ottomans' policy of decentralization only worked in Eastern Anatolia on the conditions that the local *beyliks* remained small, *beys* governing the *beyliks* maintained control over the territory that the Ottomans allotted to them, and the Ottomans minimized rivalry among *beyliks*. In essence, what had to exist was an ordered

---

<sup>147</sup> BBA, HAT 1029/42833/D, 4 Recep 1244/10 January 1829.

decentralization under strong supervision of the central state. Decentralization became a significant disadvantage to the Ottomans when the *beys* of Şehrizor, Muş, and Beyazıt began to increase their power and territorial acquisitions. With insufficient resources to rein in local power struggles in the periphery, the Ottomans as well as the locals were forced to tolerate political instability and tension between competing elites.

Another stipulation for a policy of decentralization to work was that the Ottomans had to maintain control over key garrison towns in order to supervise political activity in *yurtluk-ocaklık* regions. Selim III's foolhardy reform efforts in Eastern Anatolia led to a backlash by elites in Erzurum, Van, and Diyarbakır. The loss of control over garrison cities in the east forced the Ottomans to delay much-needed stabilization efforts in the *yurtluk-ocaklık* lands. Consequently, an environment of instability and intrigue prevailed for several decades, particularly in the areas north of Lake Van.

Only two years after Mahmud II finally managed to topple rebel leaders in Van and Diyarbakır in 1819, he was forced into an attritive war with Iran, which further stalled efforts to restore order in the Eastern Anatolian periphery. The Iranian-Ottoman war 1821-1823 was the first time that the Lake Van region was actually invaded by Iran. The Ottomans' subpar performance during the war was disconcerting to local *beys*, who grew increasingly unsure of the sultan's ability to protect their domains and honor the agreements that he had made with them. With no gains made during the war, the Ottomans were forced once again to let local politics fester in a cauldron of tension and uncertainty. So great was the disappointment of tribal leaders and *beys* in the Ottomans that many of them actually considered Russia as a favorable empire to the Ottomans during the Russo-Ottoman war 1828-1829.

Conflict in Eastern Anatolia between 1800 and 1829 was driven and dominated by the question of stability. Elites rose to power on promises of providing a political stability more effectively than could the local Ottoman administrators. However, international tensions and the overwhelming feeling of the need to make military and political reforms led the Ottomans to continually interfere in local politics and disrupt whatever order local magnates could establish. Undelivered promises, unstellar performance on the battlefield and the diplomatic arena, and unpredictable policy-making led the Kurds to grow increasingly cynical towards the Ottoman administration. Elites throughout Eastern Anatolia increasingly questioned the legitimacy of Ottoman political reform and their ability to provide order. The attitudes developed by the Kurds towards the Ottomans during this period remained in effect throughout the nineteenth century.

# CHAPTER 3

## REFORM, CENTRALIZATION, AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF CONFLICTS IN EASTERN ANATOLIA: 1829-1847

Between the 1830s and 1840s, Eastern Anatolia certainly experienced a greater degree of violent political conflict than it had in earlier periods. Conflict escalated between many local Kurdish groups and the Ottoman state resulting in high casualty numbers, particularly among the former. Additionally, tensions increased drastically among Nestorian Christians and Kurdish groups in the southeastern Hakkari region culminating in the slaughter of thousands of Nestorian Christians. These episodes of violence have prompted many to ask to what extent religious and ethnic differences fueled political friction and formed an ideological basis for violence. Some have argued that Kurdish groups developed a greater sense of ethnic consciousness during this period. The revolt of the Kurdish leader Bedr Khan Bey against the Ottoman state in the 1840s is often portrayed as an ethnic revolt, and even sometimes as evidence of the existence of a sort of proto-Kurdish nationalism. The massacres of the Nestorians in 1843 and 1846 are often explained as the result of the growing Muslim religious fanaticism that arose in reaction to the increased presence of foreign missionaries and British diplomats in southeastern Anatolia and Mosul. This chapter attempts to explore the detailed context around the major conflicts in Eastern Anatolia during the 1830s and 1840s. While it is

acknowledged that elites appealed more to religion and ethnicity as a means of mobilizing force against the state during this period, it is argued that these factors played only a secondary role. Ideology was not a main driver of conflict, but rather power struggle and political survival.

### Renewed Attempts at Centralization

The Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829 was a watershed event for the Ottoman Empire. Russia's victories in the Caucasus, Greece, and the Balkans also alarmed British politicians, leading many of them to reverse their noninterventionist policy beliefs. Moreover, the victories invigorated the proreform and procentralization camp in Ottoman politics, which was embittered towards many of the Kurdish groups in the east over their widespread defection against the Ottomans during the war and blamed their lack of loyalty to the sultan for the vulnerability of Eastern Anatolia.

In 1830 the *vali* of Erzurum Ali Şefik Paşa wrote a memorandum to the Sublime Porte expressing his frustration over the fact that the inhabitants of Muş, Van, Beyazıt, Hınıs, Tekman, Malazgirt, Kığı, Tercan, and Erzincan were under continual threat of invasion from nomadic Kurdish groups and that it would be necessary to settle them and cordon off their migration routes.<sup>1</sup> The *vali* of Diyarbakir, Yahya Paşa, pursued and exiled many of the Kurdish tribes in the region in the same year.<sup>2</sup> In April 1831, the *mutasarrıf* of Muş, Emin Paşa, was ordered to settle the nomadic tribes in Hınıs and Tekman, both under his authority, and “stimulate agricultural development” in the region,

---

<sup>1</sup> Erzurum *vali* Ali Şefik Paşa to the *kapıkethüdası* (the official representative of the *vali* in Istanbul), BBA, HAT 1040/43065-J, 9 Rebiyülahır 1246/27 September 1830.

<sup>2</sup> BBA, HAT 507/24913/B, 7 Recep 1246/22 December 1830.

which had been ravaged by the rivalries between Kurdish tribes and which was essential to rebuilding the society that had been wrecked by the Russian invasion.<sup>3</sup> The overall effect of this centralization campaign was that independent Kurdish power-holders, both those who derived their power from the state and those who derived it from connections with Kurdish tribes, were greatly weakened and left competing among each other for what power was left.

Additionally many of the Armenians vacated the region leaving their lands and possessions for Kurdish groups to compete over and occupy. Former Armenian strongholds, such as the village of Hınıs and its environs, were abandoned, and as a result the Armenians lost much of the already waning political leverage that they once had in the north near the Russian border.<sup>4</sup> In the Caucasus, however, Armenians were able to gain a gradually stronger demographic and political position. Russian population surveys show that the population of Armenians in the Yerevan and Nakhchevan regions rose from about 25,000 in 1826 to about 82,000 in 1832 while the population of Muslims decreased from 117,000 in 1826 to 82,000 in 1832. An increasing number of Muslims left the region and a correspondingly increasing number of Armenians migrated to the region throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> BBA, C.ML 269/11018, 13 Zilhicce 1246, 4 April 1831.

<sup>4</sup> A group of Protestant missionaries traveling to the region in 1834 wrote about the dearth of Armenians in the region after the war: "Khanoos formerly contained one village, and in Pasin there were some both at Hassan-kulaah and Mejengerd, but they all retired with Russian army to the Georgian provinces and now there only remain in Pasin, 15 families at Khorasan, 12 at Aljakrak, and 10 at Bashkegh." Eli Smith, H.G.O. Wight, and Josiah Conder, *Missionary Researches in Armenia Including a Journey through Asia Minor, and into Georgia and Persia, with a Visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Oormiah and Salmas* (London: G. Wightman, 1834), 429.

<sup>5</sup> Bournoutian, "The Ethnic Composition of the Socio-Economic Condition of Eastern Armenia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and*

Almost immediately after the war with Russia, the Ottomans began to face a series of new crises on its border with Iran in the Van region. Despite of the Treaty of Erzurum in 1823 which stipulated that both the Ottomans and the Iranians were to provide greater security and prevent Kurdish nomads from crossing the border and offering their services as mercenaries to rival Kurdish groups, the border remained porous. In order to keep the peace at Van, whose inhabitants were still seemingly restive even after the removal of Derviş Paşa from power in 1819, the Ottomans appointed locals to serve in the local administration. İshak Paşa, a local who had political ties with a number of Kurdish elites in the region, was appointed *vali* of Van in early 1826. The Iranian government welcomed his appointment as a show of commitment by the Ottomans to the preservation of political unity between the two Muslim states.<sup>6</sup> İshak Paşa continually showed loyalty to the sultan for most of his tenure. He coordinated with the *mutasarrıfs* of Muş and Beyazıt to pursue Selim Paşa, the former *mutasarrıf* of Muş, who had gone rogue (*hain-i padişah*) and sought refuge in the fortress at Bitlis.<sup>7</sup> İshak Paşa had also played a vital role in the Russo-Turkish war 1828-1829, during which he gathered a local military force to fend off the Russians' southward military advancement from Beyazıt and attempted to retake territory lost to the Russians.

Yet after the war, the Ottomans transferred him to Kars and appointed Timur Paşa the new *vali* of Van. Although the Ottomans' replacement of İshak seemed to be nothing

---

*Social Change*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 77-80.

<sup>6</sup> BBA, İE.HR 18/1680, 29 Zilkade 1241/4 August 1826.

<sup>7</sup> Van Muhafız İshak Paşa, Muş Mutasarrıf Ahmed Paşa, and Beyazıt Mutasarrıf Behlül Paşa to the Grand Vizier Mehmed Selim Paşa via Erzurum *vali* Galip Paşa, BBA, HAT 736/34943/B, 9 Cemaziyülevvel 1242/9 December 1226.



more than a routine rearrangement of the *valis*, İshak Paşa was angered by the move and enlisted the support of the Zilanlı Kurdish tribe, who inhabited the region north of Beyazıt, to attempt to retake Van by force. The precise motive of İshak's resistance is unclear from the documents. Yet given the fact that İshak was able to gain the support of the Kurdish *bey* of Müküs, Khan Mahmud, and the Kurdish *bey* of Hakkari, Nurullah, it is likely that he had been fostering ambitions to gain the kind of semiautonomous political status over Van that the *beys* of Müküs and Hakkari had over their respective regions.<sup>8</sup> İshak's attempts to retake Van were to no avail, a sign that the Ottoman state had entrenched its forces more deeply in the city and had either persuaded or coerced the majority of the local population to comply with its authority. İshak took refuge first with Khan Mahmud whom he tried to coax to help him retake Van. Yet despite the relatively formidable military force that Khan Mahmud was able to rally, numbering some three thousand cavalry and four thousand foot soldiers from a number of local Kurdish tribes, he was only willing to give İshak refuge and did not want to take the risk of invading Van. Disillusioned with Khan Mahmud, İshak sought refuge with Nurullah Bey in Hakkari, but he was also unable to gain traction among the Kurdish tribes there to launch another offensive on Van. Ultimately the Ottomans declared that İshak no longer constituted a threat and let him remain in Hakkari. The İshak Paşa incident shows the fickleness of the loyalty of many Kurdish elites to the Ottoman state. It is also further evidence that the Ottomans were facing a legitimacy crisis throughout eastern Anatolia, particularly in the southeastern regions of Hakkari, Mahmudi, Müküs, and Soran where

---

<sup>8</sup> Sinan Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler ve Kürt Direnişleri* (İstanbul: Doz Yayıncılık, 2007), 58-59.

the *beys* were particularly strong and independent.<sup>9</sup>

### Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia in the 1830s

The relations between Muslims and Christians throughout Eastern Anatolia experienced some strain as a result of the Russo-Ottoman War 1828-1829, particularly in the northeast where Muslim groups gradually gained control of land formerly occupied by Christians. The realization that Christians could be used by Russia to take action against them emboldened Muslims to reassert their dominance. However, since Muslim groups were quickly able to gain the upper against Armenians in the north, and Christian groups in the Caucasus, with the aid of Russia, were able to gain the upper hand against Muslims, weaker groups submitted to stronger groups and violent conflict between Muslims and Christians was stemmed. It should be noted that both the Russian and Ottoman states were not interested in completely ousting Muslims and Christians, respectively, from their territories since they relied on them as a source of income. Both states, however, cautiously strove to uproot the mobilization of religious groups.

The Protestant missionaries Eli Smith and Harrison Gray Otis Dwight surveyed Eastern Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Iranian Azerbaijan between 1831 and 1833. Their survey revealed that many local Muslims as well as the Ottoman state may not have been too keen on the Armenian exodus as a result of the war. Muslims relied on the Armenians as a tax base and were forced to find some sort of economic replacement for them. They wrote that “the Turks seem to regret the loss of their Armenian neighbors”

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 53.

and that Erzurum was economically ruined as a result of their departure.<sup>10</sup>

Their survey also revealed that in some cases Muslims and Christians were united in their opposition to both the Ottoman state and Iran, and consequently looked favorably upon Russian intervention. A Kurdish farmer in Urmia, mistaking them for Russians, told them:

You are just the men I have been waiting to see for a long time. Our government here oppresses, beats and kills us. This is Kurdistan; the Kurds are many and the Kuzul-bases (Persians) are few. When are you coming to take the country and allow us a chance to beat and kill them?<sup>11</sup>

Some communities tried to maintain or restore the social synthesis that had traditionally existed between Christians and Muslims. Lieutenant Shiel reported in 1836 that the Kurds of the Hakkari region “highly valued” the Armenians and other Christians because they attracted the Christians to inhabit the region and stimulate the economy: “A Kurd, the chief of a village, once boasted to me, that he had just enticed an Armenian priest to settle in his village; ‘for now,’ said he, ‘when I invite Christians to establish themselves here, and they inquire about a priest, I am able to say to them, here you have him.’”<sup>12</sup> Horatio Southgate, an American missionary, reported on his journey to Mardin in 1840 that Muslims and Christians participated in joint religious services:

Several *Mussulman* women came in immediately after prayers, with their children in their arms, which they presented to the priest, and kneeling themselves in humble attitude, had prayers read over them. They then left a small charity for the Church, and departed in a reverent and becoming manner. The priest assured me that Mussulmans sometimes join in the worship, and go through all the acts of devotion with the same regularity as the Christians, kneeling, bowing, and

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 1: 132, 164-165.

<sup>11</sup> Eli Smith and H.G.O. Dwight, *Researches of Rev. E. Smith and the Rev. H.G.O. Dwight in Armenia* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1833), 2: 234.

<sup>12</sup> Lieutenant Justin Shiel, “Notes on a Journey from Tabriz, Through Kurdistan, via Van, Bitlis, Se’ert and Erbil, to Suleimaniyeh, in July and August, 1836,” *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 8 (1838): 57.

prostrating themselves, but never making the sign of the cross, which is considered as the distinctive and peculiar badge of a Christian.<sup>13</sup>

It should also be noted that the Yazidi Kurds in southeastern Anatolia, who were highly heterodox Muslims, were known to have periodically enjoyed good relations with the Christians. For instance a Yazidi chief, Mirza Aga of Redwan, a town southeast of Diyarbakır, built a church for the Armenians and housed their archimandrite, Ghazar Ter Ghevondian, who taught his children Turkish and Armenian.<sup>14</sup>

While the population of Armenians in northeastern Anatolia near the Russian dropped precipitately, albeit with some slow recovery over the next few decades, some Armenian communities further south continued to maintain a degree of semiindependence from the Kurds and the Ottomans. Notably Armenian communities in Van, Zeytun, and the mountains southwest of Muş remained largely armed and capable of self-defense. The British consul James Brant noted on his journey through Eastern Anatolia in 1838 that many Armenians near Hazro (half way between Muş and Diyarbakır), "carried arms and fought with Muslims." He added that although they were subject to taxes by the surrounding Muslims they "were treated by their masters by an equal footing" due to their ability to mobilize force and fend off the Muslims.<sup>15</sup> Ahmed Ağa, a Kurdish village chief of Lice, told Brant that when the Ottoman general Reşid Paşa brought in state forces to try to centralize control over the region in 1836 the

---

<sup>13</sup> Horatio Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian [Jacobite] Church of Mesopotamia: With Statements and Reflections upon the Present State of Christianity in Turkey* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1844), 240.

<sup>14</sup> John S. Guest, *Survival Among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis* (New York; London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 64; Sir Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon: With Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan, and the Desert* (London: Murray, 1853), 2: 45.

<sup>15</sup> Brant, "Notes of a Journey Through a Part of Kurdistan," 360.

Armenians living near him were "as pertinacious as in their opposition [to Reşid Paşa] as the Mohammedans," although the Armenians insisted that the Kurds had forced them to fight the state.<sup>16</sup>

The overall absence of widespread Christian rebellions in Eastern Anatolia was highly significant, and a factor that contributed to the existence of far better relations between Christians and Muslims in Eastern Anatolia than existed in much of Greece in the 1820s, where Muslim and Christian communities became deeply polarized and engaged in massively violent attacks against each other. Even though the Russians attempted to instigate the Christians in Eastern Anatolia to rise in rebellion against the Ottoman state, and even though many Armenians championed open revolt against the sultan, the spirit of rebellion did not spread among the Christians of Eastern Anatolia to the same extent as it did in the Balkans, for three main reasons.

First, the Armenians and Assyrians were not as concentrated as the Christians in the Balkans were and lived more diffusely among Muslims. Pockets of Christian power, such as the Armenians in Van and Zeytun or the Assyrians in Tişari and Jebel Tur, were isolated within large swaths of Muslim-majority land. Thus Christian rebellions in these regions could not be as easily supported by outsiders. Furthermore, the Christians in Eastern Anatolia who did rebel could not do so without the blessing of their Muslim neighbors. If their Muslim neighbors shared a spirit of opposition with the Christians, Christian-led rebellion was possible, as was the case with Bishop Jonah of Muş who had secured the support of Kurdish *bey* Alaeddin in the mid-eighteenth century. But without the support of local Muslim groups, Christian attempts to rebel against the state generally

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 358.

foundered. Hence during the Russo-Ottoman war 1828-1829, local Muslims throughout Eastern Anatolia, more of whom were hostile to Russia than sympathetic, stamped out virtually all attempts by the Christians to rebel. Consequently Nerses Ashtaraketsi's rallying call for Armenians to support Russia and rise in protest against their Ottoman overlords did not have much effect beyond the Caucasus. The migration of tens of thousands of Armenians to Russia after the war further weakened the power base of Armenians in northeastern Anatolia.

The second reason why rebellion did not spread among the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia between the 1820s and 1840s was that despite the fact that the Armenian *millet* was centered in western Anatolia, it continued to have a great degree of control over the Christian inhabitants of Eastern Anatolia. The Armenian *millet* was virtually impenetrable by the lower classes in Eastern Anatolia who might have favored rebellion against the Ottomans. Instead, members of the Armenian *amira* class, who were strongly loyal to the Ottoman state (largely because they derived their wealth from the political *status quo*) had a tremendous degree of influence over the *millet* and practically selected the patriarch. Influential figures in the Armenian *millet* discouraged rebellious activity and generally backed the sultan. They exercised careful supervision over their appointees throughout Eastern Anatolia, who generally obeyed their orders. For instance when some Armenians entered into an alliance with Bedr Khan against the Ottoman state in the mid-1840s,<sup>17</sup> Patriarch Matteos at Istanbul sent an encyclical to Armenian ecclesiastical leaders in Diyarbakır, Bitlis, Erzurum, Palu, and Van urging them to "avenge themselves

---

<sup>17</sup> Shahbazian writes that their names were Manoğlu Stephan, Mankanvanian, Chalkatrian, and Ohannes, Shahbazian, *Kyurto-Hay Badmutyun*, 83.

of their sufferings and give help and service to the Ottoman army." Matteos even sent Armenians to join the Ottoman commander Osman Paşa against Bedr Khan. Many Armenian inhabitants of Van reportedly helped attack Cizre in 1847.<sup>18</sup> By contrast the Greek patriarch of Istanbul was far more limited in his ability to blunt the force of *Filikia Eteria* and other Greek rebel leaders, who inspired the Greeks in Morea to revolt against the state. The Greek Patriarch's influence was especially limited over the Serbs, even though he had jurisdictional authority over them, largely because of their ethnic difference.

The third reason that no significant wave of rebellion spread among the Christians in Eastern Anatolia was that Russia's policy toward the Armenians in the Caucasus generally limited the influence and spread of Armenian liberationism. Russia occupied the Caucasus in order to use the territory as a platform to launch additional military campaigns deeper into the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Russia was willing to concede some autonomy to the Armenian Gregorian Church in 1836 in the form of the *Polozhenie*, an imperial decree that specified a number of privileges that Russia would grant the Armenian church. These privileges included exemption from taxation, the right to administer its own educational system, and security for a sizeable amount of property held by the church. But at the same time Russia kept the Caucasus under tight political supervision and tried to stem all Armenian political activity that challenged the authority of either the Czar or the Armenian Catholicos. The *Polozhenie* had the positive effect of lessening the level of hostility among many of the Armenian clergy, while

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

simultaneously edging out clergy who fostered liberationist ideals.<sup>19</sup> The Armenians in the Caucasus had the further disadvantage of political isolation from other Christian powers. Whereas the geographic position of the Serbs and Greeks was such that they could leverage Austria, France, and Britain against Russia, thereby achieving autonomy from the Ottoman state rather than coming under full Russian control, the Armenians in the Caucasus were in no such position and were at the mercy of Russian officials to ensure their more limited autonomy.

The lagging economy in the Caucasus further stifled the appeal of the idea of liberation with the help of Russia.<sup>20</sup> Robert Curzon noted that many Armenian migrants to Russia were greatly disenchanted with the Russian government's apparent inability to restore economic order:

In the year 1829, Kars, Bayazeed, Van, Moush, Erzerroom, and Beyboort were occupied by the Russians, who evacuated that portion of the Turkish empire on the conclusion of the treaty of Adrianople. Trusting to the protestations of a Christian emperor, sixty-nine thousand Christian Armenian families were beguiled into the folly of leaving Mohammedan dominions, and sitting in peace under the paternal protection of the Czar....by the sacrilegious hands of the Russian soldiers, who tried to destroy those temples of their own religion which the Turks had spared, and under whose rule many of the more recent had been rebuilt on their old foundations. The greater part of these Armenians perished from want and starvation; the few who survived this sharp lesson have since been

---

<sup>19</sup> For a full English translation of the *Polozhenie* see Bournoutian, ed., *Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia*, 350-368. Also see Bournoutian's commentary on the *Polozhenie* on pages 459-461. The *Polozhenie* was a set of regulations that the Russian government put in force in 1836 that continued to allow the autonomy of the Armenian church but significantly limited the political powers of the Armenian ecclesiastic body. The effect of the *Polozhenie* on the Armenians is highly debated among scholars. Some believe it to have acted as an instrument of central state control over the Armenians that deprived them of power, while others believe the decree to have had a more benign effect.

<sup>20</sup> V.A. Diloyan and V.H. Rshtuni, "Aravelyan Hayastane Kazmum" [Eastern Armenia in the Russian Structure], *Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmutyun*, ed. T.P. Aghayan (Yerevan: Yerevani Hamalsarani Hratarakchutyun, 1974), 233-234.



endeavoring by every means in their power, to return to the lesser evils of the frying pan of Turkey, from whence they had leaped into the fire of despotic Russia.<sup>21</sup>

### Uprising in the Southeast

In 1831, Kör Muhammad Bey of Soran<sup>22</sup> commenced what was to become one of the first major Kurdish uprisings against the Ottoman state in southeastern Anatolia. Two main factors explain his decision to revolt: first, he was discontented with the fragmented politics of southeastern Anatolia and feared that his power would be challenged by rival Kurdish *beys* if he did not take the initiative. Second the Ottoman seizure of control of Baghdad from the Mamluks in 1831 and from other Kurdish *beys* further north made him aware that his power could eventually be targeted by the state. Ibrahim Paşa's invasion of Syria in 1831 and the penetration of central Anatolia in 1832 and 1833 gave Kör Muhammad a window of opportunity to mobilize local Kurdish followers and rise in revolt.

Kör Muhammad Bey was a shrewd political leader who was skilled at rallying local support and singling out his rivals. In 1814 he declared his father no longer able to manage the political affairs of the *beylik* of Soran and proclaimed himself the new leader. His bold move was greatly contested by his uncles who attempted to round up sufficient opposition to depose him. However, Kör Muhammad Bey managed to secure the backing of a number of his father's main supporters who helped him locate his rival family members and kill them. They also helped him subdue a number of rival tribes in

---

<sup>21</sup> Robert Curzon, *A Year at Erzeroom, and on the Frontiers of Russia, Turkey, and Persia* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1854), 188.

<sup>22</sup> Soran is also known as Rawanduz.

the Rawanduz region.

The paucity of sources on K r Muhammad Bey makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons that he was able to outbid his rivals. Nonetheless based on the available material, it is clear that his strong vision of not only restoring the *beylik* of Soran to its former greatness but of expanding its borders helped him gain followers. He took advantage of the political disorder of the Ottoman-Persian war 1821-1823 to penetrate southward, ousting the Baban ruler from power at Harir in 1822 and occupying Koi Sanjaq, Arbil, Altın K pr , and Ranya by February 1824. Unable to overtake K r Muhammad, Ali Reza Pa a, the *vali* of Baghdad, conceded him his conquests and recognized him as a *pa a*.<sup>23</sup>

The role that K r Muhammad of Soran played during the Russo-Turkish War 1828-1829 is unclear. Yet it is likely that it was at this time that he either began to believe, or his previous belief was reinforced, that the Yazidis and Christians posed a grave threat to the region because they were more liable to have sympathies for non-Muslim Russia. The Yazidi Kurds in the neighboring regions of Sinjar and Shaikhan had, after all, good relations with the neighboring Assyrian and Armenian Christians. One of the Yazidi leaders tried to contact the Russians informing them of their willingness to side with them and even convened a joint Christian-Yazidi force of 1,500 cavalry units and five thousand infantry to meet the Russians at Bitlis (although by the time they arrived the war was already over). Notwithstanding K r Muhammad's awareness of Yazidi and Christian sympathies towards the Russians, his brutal actions

---

<sup>23</sup> Ali Sido al-Gurani, *Min 'Amman ila al-'Amadiya* [From Amman to Amadiya] (Cairo: al-Sa'ada Press, 1939), 130-131.

against them between 1832 and 1834 are evidence enough that his wrath was kindled against them. In early 1832 Kör Muhammad and his loyalists stormed the plains near Amadiya and captured the Yazidi leader Ali Bey, whom he forced to convert to Islam.<sup>24</sup>

Kör Muhammad managed to put up a strong defense against the Ottoman forces. Ali Paşa, the *vali* of Baghdad, even wrote to the Grand Vizier that he was so much involved in the struggle against Kör Muhammad that he was unable to provide soldiers to fight against Ibrahim Paşa of Egypt.<sup>25</sup> Kör Muhammad of Soran is also said to have been in touch with Ibrahim Paşa and planned a joint operation with him against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>26</sup> By 1834 Kör Muhammad managed to take Amadiya, Cizre, Zakho, Aqrah, Dahuk, Erüh, Tel Afar, and Sinjar. He was able to quickly win some Kurds to his side through his political vision. For instance he managed to win over the loyalty of Bedr Khan Bey of Cizre, whose revolt he may well have encouraged in the 1840s. However, many Kurds, notably in Amadiya, Zakho, and Dahuk came under Kör Muhammad's control only after long sieges and were generally unwilling to submit to him. The insurgencies initiated by more intransigent Kurds in Zakho, Dahuk, Amadiya, and Aqrah stalled Kör Muhammad's northward efforts at expansion further north for a period.<sup>27</sup> Kör Muhammad was not the only Kurdish *bey* who sought greater autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, although he was probably the most prominent. A mood of

---

<sup>24</sup> Guest, *Survival Among the Kurds*, 65.

<sup>25</sup> Baghdad *vali* Ali Paşa to Grand Vizier Reşit Mehmet Paşa, BBA, HAT 347/19734/A, 1 Rebiyülevvel 1248/28 August 1832.

<sup>26</sup> Fatih Gencer, “Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler Bağlamında Bedirhan Bey Olayı” [The Bedr Khan Bey Incident in the Context of the Administrative Centralization] (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2010), 21.

<sup>27</sup> al-Gurani, *Min ‘Amman ila al-‘Amadiya*, 132-133. The years that al-Gurani cites for Kör Muhammad's uprising do not correspond with Ottoman documents. However other than the dates, I accept his account as generally accurate.

noncompliance appeared to prevail among many of the Kurds throughout Eastern Anatolia, particularly in Dersim and parts of the southeast.

In 1834, the *valis* of Mosul and Diyarbakır were not in a strong position to defend their cities against the Kurds in the southeast. The *vali* of Erzurum, Esad Paşa, was tied up with trying to rein in the political disorder that had emerged in the northeast as a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1829-1829. He was particularly involved in trying to curb the power of Emin Paşa, the *mutasarrıf* of Muş, who had only a tenuous relationship with the state. The Ottomans feared his potential defection, although he was compliant for a while.<sup>28</sup> Timur Paşa, the *vali* of Van, was also relatively weak and occupied with trying to secure the border and settle seminomadic migratory tribes.<sup>29</sup> Hence the Ottomans commissioned Reşid Paşa, the *vali* of Sivas, to lead an army into Eastern Anatolia to put down Kör Muhammad and other noncompliant Kurdish leaders and to bring the region under central control. In late 1835, İnce Bayraktar Mehmet Paşa, appointed as *vali* of Mosul, proved to be effective in stemming the growth and spread of rebellion among Kurdish groups.<sup>30</sup>

Reşid commenced his campaign in the Kurdish strongholds nearest him, Harput and Dersim. The Armenians around Harput and Çarsancak (modern-day Akpazar and Mazgirt in the Tunceli/Dersim region) warmly greeted Reşid Paşa as a liberator and

---

<sup>28</sup> See BBA, HAT 450/22347/D, 3 Rebiyülahır 1251/29 July 1835.

<sup>29</sup> According to Russian reports Timur Paşa prohibited the Celali Kurds who were seeking refuge from Hussein Ağa from crossing into Russian territory in Armenia, Report of the Baron Wrangel to Baron Rozen, 17 July 1835, no. 769, *Akty Sobranniye Kavkaskoy Arxeologicheskoy Komissii* [Collection of Documents from the Caucasian Archaeological Commission] (Tiflis: Tipografiia Kantseliarii Glavnonachal'stvushchevo Grazhdanskoii Chast'iu na Kavkaze, 1888), 8: 887-888.

<sup>30</sup> BBA, HAT 533/26254/B, 12 Ramazan 1251, 1 January 1836.

assisted him in carrying out his attacks against recalcitrant Kurds. Reşid faced fierce resistance by Kurds in the Harput and Dersim regions, who had long enjoyed little interference from the state. Yet Reşid forced the Kurds to surrender and showed that he was intent on bringing the region under central control by rounding up their ringleaders and having them hanged, impaled, or burned alive. His harsh tactics against the Kurds won him the title of "Gavur Paşa" (infidel *paşa*), implying that Kurds may have seen their struggle against the Ottoman state in part as a religious conflict.

Yet Reşid was sympathetic towards the Armenians. According to Mgrdich Antranig's history of Dersim, one of Reşid Paşa's ideas was that if he removed the Armenians from Çarsancak and Harput, which were difficult to control because of their rugged terrain, he might be able to prevent Kurdish groups from regaining power in these regions by depriving them of their source of income, since the Armenians were the industrious profit producing class in the region whom the Kurdish overlords taxed. Therefore he ordered that the Armenians in the Harput and Dersim regions be relocated to Diyarbakır, which was under greater central control and which also had a thriving population of Armenians. When the Armenian leaders refused to leave Dersim, he tried to entice them by offering to arm them and make one of them a *paşa*, which would entitle him and the Armenians under his jurisdiction to a greater number of privileges in the empire. After three days of negotiation, the Armenian elites still refused, insisting that Reşid Paşa expel the Kurds and not the Armenians. Reşid agreed to expel some of the more hostile Kurds from the region but took no further action.<sup>31</sup> The incident is yet

---

<sup>31</sup> Mgrdich Antranig, *Dersim: Janabarhutyun yev Deghakrutyun* [Dersim: Journey and Geography] (Tiflis: Martiroseants, 1900), 53-58.

further evidence that the Ottomans, in spite of several cases of Armenian resistance during the war with Russia in 1828, believed that it was the Kurds rather than the Armenians who posed a greater threat to the state in the east. Ottoman leaders had confidence that the Armenian *millet* leaders were strong enough and ensconced enough in the empire to prevent the growth of an internal Armenian resistance movement like the Serbs in Belgrade or the Greeks in the Morea.

From Harput, Reşid Paşa proceeded southeast through Diyarbakır towards the crisis area of Soran. A letter signed by a number of Kurdish dignitaries including beys, muftis, and shaykhs of Zakho, Amadiye, and Aqrah asking for his intervention against Kör Muhammad of Soran was further encouragement for Reşid Paşa. He wrote them back assuring them that the sultan's army would not allow his loyal subjects to become the victims of a rebel and urged them make an entreaty to the *vali* of Baghdad, who was nearer to them, to encourage him to take action.<sup>32</sup>

Soon after sending the missive, Ismail Paşa of Amadiya proclaimed himself the *mutasarrıf* of the small southeastern Anatolian village, which was gaining prominence due to its vulnerable position, under the pretext that locals demanded that he be the leader. Although he insisted that he would assist the state in gaining control over the region, officials were skeptical of his true intentions and reprimanded him for not assuming power through official channels. Ismail's apparent usurpation of power strengthened Reşid's resolve to penetrate the relatively lawless and restive region and dissolve what had become multiple forces of rebellion, many of which were emboldened

---

<sup>32</sup> Reşid Paşa to the *beys* of Amadiya, BBA, HAT 448/22317/B-C 1 Zilkade 1250/31 March 1835, cited in Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 71-72.

by the rise of the paşa of Soran.<sup>33</sup>

In late 1835 Reşid stormed Garzan (modern-day Yanarsu located west of Siirt and south of Sasun), and put down resistance there with the help of the three thousand irregular soldiers recruited by the Kurdish *bey* Emin Paşa of Muş, who was then an invaluable Kurdish ally of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that Emin Paşa was not well liked by Esad Paşa of Erzurum, under whose jurisdiction the *sancak* of Muş lay. Due to a “continuous stream of complaints from the inhabitants of Muş about Emin Paşa,” Esad ordered his removal. Reşid Paşa on the other hand liked Emin Paşa of Muş because he commanded the allegiance of the Kurds over a relatively large area, prevented the Kurds in the region from rebelling against the Ottoman state, and was capable of mustering a rather large force. Therefore he petitioned the sultan to not remove Emin but to join his forces with Reşid’s.<sup>35</sup> Mirza Ağa of nearby Rıdvan, the Yezidi chieftain who had written a letter to the Russians in 1830 pledging his allegiance to them against the Ottomans, submitted to Reşid Paşa for fear that the forces at his command were no match for those of the *vali* of Sivas.<sup>36</sup>

Ibrahim Paşa of Egypt’s attempts to capture Baghdad by moving his troops via the northern Tigris in Syria in early 1836 forced Reşid Paşa to set aside his campaign towards Soran and fend him off at Urfa, thus staving off any further aggravation of the

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>34</sup> Reşid Paşa to the Grand Vizier Mehmed Emin Rauf, BBA, HAT 447/22311/A, 10 Recep 1251/1 November 1835, document 3, cited in *ibid.*, 75-76.

<sup>35</sup> Report of the Baron Wrangel to Baron Rosen, 17 July 1835, Erzurum, report no. 769, in *Akti Sobranniye Kavkazskoy Arkheograficheskoy Komissyei* [Documents Collected by the Caucasian Archeological Commission] (Tiflis, 1866-1904), 8: 887-888.

<sup>36</sup> Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 2: 45.

already exuberantly rebellious Kurdish population in northern Iraq.<sup>37</sup> Reşid Paşa resumed his campaign in the spring of 1836 by ordering a division of his forces to put down the rebellion of Mirza Ağa at Silvan, and another division to confront the Azizan family at Cizre.

Cizre had long been one of the most remote areas from Ottoman authority. Its rugged terrain certainly made it a difficult place for the sultan's military to penetrate. Yet since it was distant from areas where the rivals of the Ottomans exercised power, such as the Russians and Persians in the Caucasus, the Persians in Azerbaijan, the Mamluks in Baghdad, and Muhammad Ali in Egypt, it was not deemed a particularly strategic area to control and was one of the last regions in Eastern Anatolia to be recognized as *hükümet* land, which had the most independent status. Indeed it was greatly due to the isolation of both the city and its immediate environs from various centers power that the region itself became one of the strongest centers of Kurdish power under the leadership of Bedr Khan Bey in the 1840s.

The inhabitants of Cizre were particularly unruly and unaccustomed to the passage of outsiders. Sir John Kinnier was imprisoned at Cizre by the local *bey* and “heavily fined” during his travels in the mid-1810s.<sup>38</sup> In a letter to his brother, Reşid Paşa noted that the religious class, the Kurdish *shaykhs*, commanded tremendous respect among the region's inhabitants; so much, that when “two tribes were fighting each other and a *shaykh* intervened, the two tribes would immediately lay down their weapons and return to their places of residence.”<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 76-77.

<sup>38</sup> Shiel, “Notes on a Journey from Tabriz, Through Kurdistan,” 87.

<sup>39</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 79.



Yet since the ruling Azizan family, one of their prominent members being Bedr Khan Bey,<sup>40</sup> had allied themselves with Muhammad Paşa of Soran when he penetrated the area in 1835, its capture became a priority for Reşid Paşa and his forces. Cizre was no easy conquest for Reşid. The Cizre rebels were remarkable marksmen and were able to take refuge in a number of mountain fortresses for several months before Reşid's army was able to subdue them. It was only after they completely demolished the Said Bey fortress that they were able to force Bedr Khan Bey to surrender.<sup>41</sup> Reşid wrote that since the Cizre region was "formidable, with its villages and fortresses especially robust and its people brave and warlike, it was extremely difficult to take."<sup>42</sup>

Reşid Paşa's campaign throughout eastern and southeastern Anatolia had been successful at providing security to the region. This is verified by Lieutenant Shiel who reported that during a journey to the region in the summer of 1836 a mullah of Tilaberi, a village five miles south of Zakho, told him that it would have been impossible to travel in the region before the soldiers of Reşid Paşa contained it due to the prevalent instability and the grave suspicions of outsiders harbored by local Kurdish groups.<sup>43</sup> Consul Brant provides further verification of the successes of Reşid Paşa and his successor Hafız Paşa in securing Eastern Anatolia. He avers that the Ottoman state managed to instill political order to the extent that those Armenians who had been facing persecution by Kurdish groups were able to resume social activity uninterrupted by anxiety-stricken and vengeful

---

<sup>40</sup> In his letters Reşid Paşa believes the *bey* of Cizre to be Seyfeddin; however, Layard asserts that Bedr Khan Bey continued to rule in the name of Seyfeddin. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 2: 54.

<sup>41</sup> Guest, *Survival Among the Kurds*, 73.

<sup>42</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 78.

<sup>43</sup> Shiel, "Notes on a Journey from Tabriz, Through Kurdistan," 85.

Kurdish groups.<sup>44</sup>

After taking Cizre, Reşid Paşa proceeded onward to Soran to put down Muhammad Paşa, whose actions had instilled the Kurds with a new political consciousness and had emboldened many of them against the state. In this regard it is somewhat ironic that by the time Reşid reached Soran in the spring of 1836, Mehmet Paşa's forces had been worn thin because of resistance against them by Kurds whom his forces had subdued in Dahuk, Zakho, and Aqrah and were not capable of putting up the redoubtable front that Reşid was expecting. Therefore Muhammad withdrew and quickly surrendered. al-Gurani believes that a significant reason for Kör Muhammad's swift decision to withdraw was Reşid's persuasion of the *mufti* of Soran, Mulla Mohammad Khati, to back the sultan against local resistance. The *mufti* allegedly issued a fatwa declaring that "whoever fought against the army of the caliph would be considered an unbeliever and would therefore be divorced from his wife."<sup>45</sup> Since the *mufti's* words held greater sway among the local Muslim Kurds of Soran than those of Kör Muhammad, they were loath to carry on rebellion against Reşid. Another reason that Muhammad Paşa of Soran quickly surrendered was that Reşid was a skilled negotiator and persuaded him that if he discontinued his rebellion he would be treated well and later restored to his position as the *mütesellim* of Soran.

Kör Muhammad of Soran was captured in December 1836 and taken to Istanbul. But in June 1837, Sultan Mahmud II ordered his release and allowed him to return to Soran with the new title of *ferik*, Major General.<sup>46</sup> The sultan's decision appears to have

---

<sup>44</sup> Brant, "Notes of Journey Through a Part of Kurdistan," 367.

<sup>45</sup> al-Gurani, *Min 'Amman ila al-'Amadiya*, 133.

<sup>46</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 82.

been based on the agreement that was struck with Reşid Paşa under which Kör Muhammad would be restored to his position in the Soran region provided that he submit to the state and maintain the peace. The decision was also based on the Ottoman policy of catch and release, according to which state forces would capture a strong rebel leader only to show that the state was capable of putting down his resistance, but then renegotiate terms with him and allow him to continue his tenure in his former political position on condition of his loyalty to the state.

Yet two significant factors prevented the sultan from being able to transfer Kör Muhammad, the most powerful Kurdish leader in decades, back to Soran. First, Reşid Paşa died unexpectedly in Diyarbakır from cholera in January 1837<sup>47</sup> and was replaced by Hafız Paşa, an ethnic Circassian. The specific policy that combined military force with diplomacy that was being implemented throughout Eastern Anatolia and Iraq was largely based on the ideas of Reşid. The respect that Reşid commanded among the *valis* throughout Eastern Anatolia and Iraq was crucial for the success of the policy. The second reason Kör Muhammad could not be restored to power was that Ali Paşa, the *vali* of Baghdad, was opposed to the sultan's decision to appoint him to the position of *ferik* and tried to stall efforts to bring him back to Soran. On the pretexts of needing further investigation of Kör Muhammad and continued opposition to his return expressed by many local Kurdish groups, he persuaded Hafız Paşa to have him detained temporarily at Amasya, where he died of unknown causes.<sup>48</sup> His brother Resul Paşa was appointed as

---

<sup>47</sup> Muhammad Amin Zaki, *Khulasat Tarikh al-Kurd wa Kurdistan min Aqdam al-'Usur Hatta al-'An* [A Summary of the History of the Kurds and Kurdistan from the Most Ancient Times until the Present], trans. Muhammad Ali Awni (Cairo: al-Sa'ada Press, 1939), 246; BBA, HAT 448/22322/A, 13 Şevval 1252/21 January 1837.

<sup>48</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 82-84.

*mutasarrıf* of Soran in his stead.

### Hafız Paşa's Military Campaign

The strategy of the Ottoman campaign in Eastern Anatolia changed with the appointment of Hafız Paşa to the position of *vali* of Sivas. Hafız was originally a palace slave who worked his way up in the military by fighting against Greek rebels in Morea in the 1820s, fighting against the Russian army in 1829, and leading a military regiment into Albania in the mid-1830s.<sup>49</sup> His political philosophy was markedly different from that of Reşid; he was a strong advocate of the dissolution of the old social orders on the periphery, the abolition of irregular militias to fight battles, and the direct recruitment of the different ethnic groups into the military. Hafız is portrayed in many histories as austere and merciless against Kurdish rebels. The Russian historian D. Georg Rozen believes Hafız Paşa to have killed some fifteen thousand Kurds and imprisoned six thousand others during his military campaigns in Eastern Anatolia between 1837 and 1839.<sup>50</sup> A European observer remarked that the suffering of the Kurds as a result of Hafız Paşa's campaigns resembled something of the "torture of the convicts in Dante's *Inferno*."<sup>51</sup>

Hafız Paşa's military campaigns were indeed brutal. He had little tolerance for opposition and was swift to order a kinetic military action at the first sight of resistance.

---

<sup>49</sup> Helmut von Moltke, *Türkiye'deki Durum ve Olaylar Üzerine Mektuplar (1835-1839)* [Letters on the Events and Situation in Turkey], trans. Hayrullah Örs (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1960), 167. Letitia Wheeler Ufford, *The Pasha: How Mehemet Ali Defied the West, 1839-1841* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 24.

<sup>50</sup> D. Georg Rozen, *Istoriya Turtsii ot Pobedy Reformy v 1826 Godu do Parizhskavo Traktata v 1856 Godu* [The History of Turkey from the Success of the Reform of 1826 to the Paris Treaty of 1856] (St. Petersburg, 1872), cited in Ghazarian, *Arevmtahayeri*, 232.

<sup>51</sup> *Manzume*, no. 2629, cited in *ibid*.

Although it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of casualties and damages that his campaigns inflicted, there is little doubt that he was much less of a proponent of diplomacy with Kurdish rebels than was his predecessor Reşid. This is evidenced in his bloody campaign that he led against a number of Yazidi rebels in the Garzan, Telafar, and Sinjar regions in the summer of 1837. Unlike Reşid who merely cowed rebels into submission but then left the ringleaders in place, Hafız made sure to have them either exiled at best or put to death at worst. After forcing Yazidi rebels to surrender at Telafar, Hafız rounded up some three thousand Yazidi boys to be relocated elsewhere in the empire and incorporated into the military, a testament of his belief that different ethnic and religious groups could be absorbed and assimilated into the Ottoman system in much the same way as he had been himself.<sup>52</sup>

Further evidence that Hafız Paşa believed that ethnic assimilation into the military system, somewhat akin to an expanded *devşirme* system, would solve many of the problems of disloyalty throughout Eastern Anatolia lay in the fact that he also mentioned to Helmut von Moltke while accompanying him on his military expedition to Malatya in 1838 that he thought it a good idea to try to incorporate the Christian Armenians into the military. However, von Moltke urged him against it, thinking that the Armenian recruits would be subject to ethnic discrimination by the Kurds and hence would not be able to rise in the ranks of the military, would be easily discouraged, and would not make effective soldiers.<sup>53</sup>

Brant writes that based on a report from Ahmad Ağa, one of the Turkish men in

---

<sup>52</sup> Hafız Paşa to Sultan Mahmud II, BBA, HAT 449/22340/B, 13 Rebiyülahır 1253/10 July 1837, cited in Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 86.

<sup>53</sup> Helmut von Moltke, *Türkiye'deki Durum ve Olaylar Üzerine Mektuplar*, 278-279.

the service of Hafız Paşa, that Hafız and cooperating Ottoman administrators subjected the Kurds and Armenians around Diyarbakır to heavy taxation in order to finance the state's centralization operations. According to Ahmad Ağa, the burden of the impositions was so much that the people "were in a state barely removed from starvation." Brant writes that Ahmad Ağa "believed Hafız Pasha was ignorant of this, and he attributed the heavy drains on the people to Sa'du-l-lah Pasha of Diyar-Bekr. No one, however, dared to state the fact to Hafız Pasha."<sup>54</sup>

Hafız Paşa was arguably more successful at subduing Kurdish rebels than Reşid Paşa had been. While both were effective at providing security to what had become a lawless region in Eastern Anatolia, Hafız Paşa arguably employed much stronger force against the Kurds:

[In 1829] the Russians were...advancing, and the encumbrance of [Armenian] emigrants with their families did not suit them. At that period the Kurds regarded the Armenians as partisans of the invaders, and made no scruple in plundering and often murdering them. Since the operations of Reshid Mohammed Pasha and of Hafız Pasha, and particularly since the enrolment of the militia of this Pashalik, the Kurds do not venture to rob openly, and even instances of secret theft have become rare: the effect of the last measure has imposed a moral restraint on this wild race, which is extraordinary when it is considered how few the numbers of the militia are (in this Pashalik not many hundreds), how recently the system has been introduced, and how inefficient the force yet is, from the imperfection of their equipment and discipline.<sup>55</sup>

Hafız Paşa's main function was to subdue pockets of ongoing resistance among the Kurdish groups more thoroughly many of whom Reşid Paşa's forces had only temporarily contained. Hafız's initial strategy was to divide his military into two

---

<sup>54</sup> Brant, "Notes of Journey Through a Part of Kurdistan," 355-358, citation is on page 358.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 348.

detachments allowing him to penetrate Bohtan and the area around Nineveh simultaneously. This prevented groups from being able to build alliances as had Kör Muhammad with the Kurds at Cizre earlier in the mid 1830s.

Hafız first took his detachment to Sinjar in May 1837 where he attempted to subdue Yazidi rebels with the help of the *vali* of Mosul. The Yazidis were able to withstand the joint force temporarily by hiding in caves. However, Ottoman soldiers managed to storm many of the caves, kill all the men, and take the women and children captive. Hafız managed to capture more than six thousand individuals whom he had resettled to the plains of Nusaybin, Mardin, and areas around Diyarbakır. Yet since the Yazidis did not blend with the local population because of their different religion, entreaties were made for them to be able to return to the Sinjar region, which Hafız accepted.<sup>56</sup>

After the surrender of Sinjar one detachment of Hafız Paşa's force marched on Tel Afar in the south and another detachment on Cizre and Garzan. They were able to take Tel Afar after a three-month siege, in which both sides suffered numerous casualties. The Yazidi rebels there eventually surrendered due to a lack of ammunition. Garzan and Cizre proved to be much more difficult to take. With the arrival of winter and the harsh weather, the Ottoman military took a break until the spring of 1838.

The final frontier for Hafız Paşa was the region due south of Lake Van where Khan Mahmud held a strong enclave. Khan Mahmud had managed to expand his family's control over a large swath of land ranging from Müküs (modern-day Bahçesaray), Mahmudi and Hoşab Kalesi (in modern-day Güzelsu), and Gevaş. He

---

<sup>56</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Durumu," 51-52.

appointed his brothers to govern over these regions. It is not known why Khan Mahmud had been able to amass territory during a period in which the Ottomans were desperately trying to centralize control. Part of it may have had to do with the fact the Ottomans thought the Kurds in Soran and Cizre, with whom Khan Mahmud did not ally, to be a greater threat. Also Khan Mahmud's seemingly unchallenged rise to power may have had to do with the fact that the domain that he ruled over was geographically distant from any of the strong centrally controlled *valiliks* of the time. The *vali* of Van during the 1830s was relatively weak and focused solely on keeping control over the city of Van, a politically volatile environment.

Much like Emin Paşa of Muş and Behlül Paşa of Beyazıt, Khan Mahmud may have managed to derive much of his wealth from the relatively rich Armenian religious and merchant classes in the region. In his domain lay the monastery of Aktamar, located on an island in Lake Van, not far from Gevaş, which was home of the Armenian Catholicos of Akdamar, who held the highest ranking clerical position in the Gregorian Armenian church in the whole southeastern Anatolian region. Consul Brant reports that the Catholicos of Akdamar, who had declared his independence from the Supreme Catholicos of Echmiadzin, had to bribe Khan Mahmud for his position. Akdamar was a significant pilgrimage site for Armenians and as such was a region of significant economic activity among Christian groups, who were able to afford the large demands placed upon them by the neighboring Kurds. As a result their relations were relatively good and the Kurds held back from applying harsh and violent tactics against the



Armenians.<sup>57</sup>

The beys of Hakkari and Cizre felt threatened by the growth of Khan Mahmud's power in the region. Müküs had never been a significant center of Kurdish power. But his capture of Hoşap Kale, the castle at Güzelsu located near the border with Iran between Hakkari and Van, and his capture of territory near the emirate of Bohtan aroused the suspicions of Bedr Khan of Cizre and Nurullah Bey of Hakkari who decided to launch a counterattack against him. Khan Mahmud appealed to the *vali* of Erzurum, Osman Paşa, for help against the collaborating Kurdish elites. Osman alerted Hafız Paşa to Khan Mahmud's desperate situation and the two used the opportunity as a means of centralizing control over the region south of Lake Van. They had Khan Mahmud and his brothers exiled to Beyazıt, but then allowed them to return two years later.

Ibrahim Paşa's campaign into northern Syria in 1839 deterred Hafız Paşa from continuing his centralization campaign throughout Eastern Anatolia. In June Hafız Paşa met Ibrahim's 40,000 strong force at Nizip, between Aintab (Gaziantep) and Urfa, with a force of 50,000 regular soldiers and 30,000 irregulars. Despite outnumbering Ibrahim Paşa's army, Hafız's overall lack of organization and military supplies made it too difficult to withstand the blow dealt by Ibrahim. The battle lasted only two hours, but resulted in over four thousand casualties. It was an embarrassing defeat for the Ottomans who had been desperately trying to enhance their military while holding onto what little control they had over a region that seemed to be constantly eluding them. Other participants in the Battle of Nizip were Emin Paşa of Muş and Bedr Khan of Cizre who

---

<sup>57</sup> Sabri Ateş, "Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881" (PhD diss., New York University, 2006), 71.

both led a force of Kurdish irregulars, although it is unclear how much their individual forces contributed. According to Brant, Emin Paşa ended up betraying Hafız Paşa.<sup>58</sup> Bedr Khan withdrew his forces early from the battle and retreated to Cizre where, taking inspiration from the rebel force of Ibrahim Paşa, he made preparations for a new political campaign to achieve greater autonomy in Cizre and expand his power over the neighboring regions.<sup>59</sup>

### Bedr Khan: The Sources of His Power

Bedr Khan, the leading *bey* of Cizre between 1838, when he defected from Said Bey's local militia at Cizre and submitted to Hafız Paşa's forces,<sup>60</sup> and 1847, when he was captured and exiled by the Ottomans, has been portrayed in a number of different lights. He is most noted for being the most successful of all the Kurdish *beys* at amassing power in Eastern Anatolia and more notoriously for spearheading a series of brutal massacres of Assyrian Christians in the Hakkari region in 1843 and 1846. In many histories of Kurdish nationalists and Kurdish sympathizers he is depicted as a hero who struggled for the liberation of the Kurds from a tyrannical Ottoman state. But in the histories of many Assyrian nationalists and Assyrian sympathizers Bedr Khan is depicted as a villain who was intolerant of the religious diversity around him.

The nature of Bedr Khan's power and the means by which he achieved it has long

---

<sup>58</sup> Fatih Gencer, "Merkezîyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 64.

<sup>59</sup> Guest, *Survival Among the Kurds*, 80. Guest also notes that in 1886 "Moltke did not recollect that Bedr Khan [Bey] had even been there."

<sup>60</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 48/1225 cited in Cabir Doğan, "II Mahmut Dönemi Osmanlı Merkezileşme Politikasının Doğu Vilayetlerinde Uygulanması" [The Application of the Ottoman Centralization Policy in the Eastern Vilayets during the Mahmut II Period], *International Periodical for the Languages, Literature, and History of Turkish or Turkic* 6, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 513.

been a topic of great debate among scholars. Historians generally agree that Bedr Khan's power was in large degree attributable to the Ottoman state, which allowed him to expand his influence and control in the region as the sultan and his administrators were in the process of devising a new strategy to maintain control against centrifugal forces throughout the empire. Histories that focus on and are generally sympathetic to the Kurds tend to attribute Bedr Khan's acquisition of power to his ability to arouse the Kurds in the region to a collective consciousness of their inferiority in relation to the Ottoman Empire, and to motivate them to improve their lot. Histories sympathetic to the Assyrians attribute the rise of Bedr Khan's power to the Ottoman state itself. By looking at Ottoman sources it appears most likely that Bedr Khan derived his power not so much directly from the Ottoman state, but from the grassroots, since the campaigns of Hafız Paşa wiped out many of Bedr Khan's potential rivals. But the scope and brutality of his campaigns also gave Kurds throughout Bohtan, Behdinan, Müküs, and Soran a shared traumatic experience for Bedr Khan to seize upon in uniting them against the Ottoman state.

In Western and Ottoman reports from the late 1830s and 1840s, Bedr Khan appears neither as a proto-Kurdish nationalist nor as someone who was bent on exterminating all the Assyrian Christians in the region. Instead his political ideology seems rather shallow, and his main motivations for consolidating power and killing the Assyrians along with rival Kurdish groups appear to be rooted in his anxieties over what he believed was the looming state of anarchy in the region.

Bedr Khan's rise to power is virtually unprecedented among the Kurds in Ottoman Eastern Anatolia. The area that he managed to subject to his power ranged from

Nehri in the east, Mardin in the West, Sinjar in the south, and Gevaş in the north, in essence nearly the entire region between Diyarbakır, Van, and Mosul.<sup>61</sup> The reach of his power is especially significant given the fact that his center of power was Cizre, which had long been a relatively insignificant hinterland whose inhabitants were difficult to unite due to their religious and ethnic diversity. Yet the fact that Cizre was distant from the centers of Ottoman power is one of the reasons why Bedr Khan was able to amass power somewhat unchallenged by the state. Yet the question remains why he was able to gain such power when other Kurdish elites throughout eastern and southeastern Anatolia, who likely desired the power that Bedr Khan managed to achieve by 1846, could not.

The first reason lay in the fact that Bedr Khan was exposed to more personalities, areas, and political events than other Kurdish leaders in the region. He had come into contact with Kör Muhammad Bey of Soran during his campaigns in 1835, an experience which allowed to him witness first hand that expansion by the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia despite increasing Ottoman control was indeed possible. Although Kör Muhammad was routed by 1836, Bedr Khan's brief alliance with him and his experience of Kör Muhammad's political efforts was enough to plant in his head the idea of a far-reaching Kurdish political domain that was semiautonomous from the state. It is quite likely that his experience at the Battle of Nizip in 1839 also contributed to the formation of his political vision. It was there that he further witnessed the military inadequacy of the Ottoman Empire against Ibrahim Paşa, and learned that the legitimacy crisis of the empire extended well beyond Cizre.

The second reason he was able to come to power was that Ottoman officials saw

---

<sup>61</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, 178.

him as the member of the Kurdish elite who was the most compliant with their orders in Cizre. When Reşid Paşa besieged Cizre in 1836 and it became apparent that the Kurdish rebels could no longer hold out, Bedr Khan submitted to the Ottomans. His brother Seyfeddin Bey, who at that time probably held greater power than Bedr Khan and was in charge of the rebel force at Cizre, fled to Baghdad where he entered into the service of the *vali* there.<sup>62</sup> As a reward for his submission, Bedr Khan was given the symbolic title of *miralay* (colonel), but no soldiers.<sup>63</sup> By 1838, when Hafız Paşa marched against Cizre, Bedr Khan seems to have deferred to another local Kurdish elite Said Bey. Yet it was because of this deference that Hafız's forces attributed the rebellion of Cizre to Said, whom they removed from power, and not Bedr Khan, whom they ended up keeping in power.<sup>64</sup> Hence because of his continual appearance as a subordinate during rebellions rather than as the leader of the rebellion he managed to evade being targeted by the Ottoman forces.

The third reason for Bedr Khan's rise to power is that the rivals in his immediate environment were quelled either by his own force or by the Ottoman army. He consolidated power in the immediate environs of Cizre during the 1820s by gaining the support of local tribes and by dealing a harsh blow to his opponents. He had Brahim Ağa of the Miran tribe killed because he would not recognize his authority.<sup>65</sup> Reşid and Hafız managed to severely weaken the power of the Kurdish groups in Sinjar, Garzan, and Müküs. By 1839 he was one of the few Kurdish elites in the region whose status had not

---

<sup>62</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 48/1225 cited in Cabir Doğan, "II Mahmut Dönemi," 513-514.

<sup>63</sup> Moltke, *Türkiye'deki Durum ve Olaylar Üzerine Mektuplar*, 201.

<sup>64</sup> Not much is known about Said Bey except from Moltke.

<sup>65</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, 179.

been severely weakened by the Ottoman state.

Perhaps one of the most important factors explaining Bedr Khan's ability to amass power was his ability to make a case for the unity and mobilization of the Kurds in the region based on the shared trauma brought on them by the Ottoman state. The campaigns of Reşid and Hafız may have been a temporary tactical success, but they were a strategic failure. Instead of bringing infrastructural developments to the region that would endear locals to the state, the administrators simply used brute force to try to subdue the Kurds. What made matters worse was that after the application of force, they continued to face a legitimacy crisis perhaps even worse than what they had faced before, and ended up having to turn to the very Kurdish elites whose patrons they had crushed to govern.

#### Reasons for the Massacres of Assyrian Christians

The reasons for killing of the Assyrian Christians, also referred to as the Nestorians or Nestorian Christians, in the villages around Hakkari in 1843 and 1846 have been a matter of great debate among scholars. One of Hirmis Aboona's<sup>66</sup> main claims is that the massacres were in essence an extension of the centralization project that Sultan Mahmud II and his son Sultan Abdülmecid I were undertaking with the help of the *valis*, particularly Ince Bayraktar Mehmet Paşa, often referred to as just Mehmet or Muhammad Paşa. His argument is that Muhammad Paşa of Mosul managed to centralize control over the area north of Mosul and coerce Bedr Khan to comply with his orders. While the violent undertaking against the Assyrians of the Tiyari region (modern-day Çığlı Bucağı)

---

<sup>66</sup> His work is the most extensive analysis of Bedr Khan and the massacres of the Assyrians in the English language.

in 1843, and later of the Assyrians in Tkhuma (modern-day Cevizli Köyü) in 1846, was part of an initiative created by Bedr Khan, it coincided with the general interests of the *vali* of Mosul and was therefore given his stamp of approval. In fact Bedr Khan did not carry out the massacre without first seeking his approval.<sup>67</sup> He also attributes some of the violence to the political activities of the missionaries who “stirred up and created much hostility between the different tribes, on the one hand, and between the *meliks* and the patriarch, on the other.”<sup>68</sup> His sources include both accounts by American and British missionaries who traveled and lived in the region, and the reports of British government officials who also traveled throughout the region and closely monitored the political and social activity there. His explanations mirror their beliefs.

Wadie Jwaideh also devotes a number of pages to the analysis of the massacres of Assyrians. He attributes the massacres to a wider range of reasons than Aboona. The leading Kurdish *mirs* of the region, Ismail Paşa of Amadiya, Nurullah Bey of Hakkari, and Bedr Khan of Bohtan, were all hostile towards the tribal Nestorians because they refused to submit to their authority or pay them tribute, and even engaged in blood feuds with members of their tribes. Yet, because the Assyrians in Tiyyari, Tkhouma, and Aşıta were too powerful to subdue, they faced a longstanding political stalemate with them and were forced to tolerate their autonomy from their authority. However, a number of political and religious divisions that arose in the Assyrian community in the 1840s weakened them and provided a window of opportunity for the Kurdish *mirs* to attack them. Nurullah Bey, the *mir* of Hakkari who had formerly enjoyed good relations with

---

<sup>67</sup> Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 195-214.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

the Assyrians, grew hostile to them because he suspected many of them of allying with a local Muslim rival against him. Jwaideh also highlights the political role of the missionaries as a catalyst for ethnic tensions in the region, citing specifically the construction of a mission building in Hakkari—which local Kurds mistook for a military fortress or *kale*—strategic military outposts for Kurdish militias throughout Eastern Anatolia—as one of the leading causes of political “agitation” between groups. He also believes the Ottoman government to have been complicit in the attacks against the Assyrians and that it was both in the interests of the *valis* of Erzurum and Mosul to subdue the Assyrians in the mountains south of Hakkari, even if that required dealing them a harsh blow.<sup>69</sup> His sources are also based on mainly the accounts of Western religious and government observers who lived and traveled in the region. A number of other English-language explanations for the massacres are based on similar sources and account for similar factors behind the massacres, albeit with different weight given to the various different factors.

In recent years there have been a couple of Turkish dissertations that have mined the Ottoman archives in order to shed new light on Bedr Khan Bey the Ottoman state and their roles in the massacres of Assyrians. These ostensibly downplay the role of the Ottoman government in the massacres and instead highlight Bedr Khan as the mastermind behind the onslaught who acted in defiance of official orders.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Its Origins and Development* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 66-72.

<sup>70</sup> See Fatih Gencer, “Merkeziyetçi İdari Durumu” Bağlamında Bedirhan Bey Olayı” [The Bedr Khan Bey Incident in the Context of the Centralization Policy] (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2010) and Cabir Doğan, “Cizre ve Bohtan Emiri Bedirhan Bey (1802-1869)” [Cizre and the Emir of Bohtan Bedr Khan Bey] (PhD diss., Afyon Kocatepe University, 2010).



Overall analyses of the massacres of the Nestorians tend to mimic the arguments made by contemporary observers, many of which are satisfactory, but lack any in-depth analysis of a number of crucial questions regarding the logic of violence, especially within the broader context of the numerous conflicts and power struggles occurring among various actors at the time. Among the most significant questions that need answering are: why was the violence in the mountains south of Hakkari so severe, when other Assyrians throughout the region were untouched? If the complicity of the Ottoman government in the massacres can indeed be proven, what was their motive and why did they consider the Assyrians to be such a major threat, especially when they had been concentrating their forces to suppress the Kurdish *mirs* who could mobilize a much larger force and therefore constituted a much greater threat to the Ottoman centralization project than the Assyrians?

To answer these questions it is important to begin with a brief synopsis of who the Assyrians were and the state of their relations with their Muslims neighbors. Ethnic Assyrians lived throughout southeastern Anatolia and northern Iraq, being most greatly concentrated in Mosul, Diyarbakır, Urmiye, Hakkari, and the mountainous area between Hakkari and Mosul. They only constituted a majority of the population in a handful of villages mainly located to the south of Hakkari. Their society consisted of both tribes, many of whom were armed, self-protecting, rent-seekers, and peasants (*rayah*).

The tribes living in the mountains were self-governing and enjoyed *de facto* autonomy not only from the Ottoman authority but the authority of neighboring Kurdish tribes. Justin Perkins, an American missionary who lived among the Nestorians for some thirty years, writes a good description of the socioeconomic divisions of the Assyrian

Christians in the early 1840s, before the massacres of the Assyrians took place:

The least populous districts of these Nestorians, as Gavar, Somai, Chara, Mamoodiah, and some others, are subject to the Koordish tribes who dwell in the same districts, and by whom (being by far the most numerous) the Nestorians are severely oppressed and often plundered. Other districts, as Diz, Jeeloo, Bass, Tehoob [Tkhouma], and Tiaree, have a larger Nestorian population, and are more independent of their Koordish neighbors.<sup>71</sup>

Henry Ross, a British traveler, notes that the Assyrian tribes in Tiyari would often descend on the neighboring districts of Berwari and Amadiya to plunder both Muslim and Christian villages “indiscriminately.” The Christian raiders were more prone to spare the lives of fellow Christians, but would “invariably murder...as many of the Koordish [*sic*] men as they could, but respected the women.”<sup>72</sup>

Grant reports stories to the effect that the Kurds around the region greatly feared the Nestorians in the mountains south of Hakkari. On one occasion his Kurdish guide would not let him travel into the mountains of Tiyari because the Nestorians had cut off the heads of seven Kurds of Soran and hung their bodies over a bridge as a warning for them not to cross their territory.<sup>73</sup>

The Assyrians adhered to a number of Christian theologies, including the Jacobite, Nestorian, and Catholic theological traditions. The Assyrians were first introduced to Catholicism by Jesuit missionaries in the mid-sixteenth century who continued to proselytize them up until the late seventeenth century.<sup>74</sup> They were referred to as Chaldeans. By the mid-nineteenth century Percy Badger estimates the number of

---

<sup>71</sup> Perkins, *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia*, 6.

<sup>72</sup> Henry James Ross, Mosul, 19 November 1847, cited in *Letters from the East by Henry James Ross 1837-1857*, Janet Ross, ed. (London: J.M. Dent, 1902), 62.

<sup>73</sup> *Missionary Herald* 37 (1841), 122.

<sup>74</sup> Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 142-144.

Chaldeans to have been about twenty thousand throughout all of southeastern Anatolia and northern Iraq.<sup>75</sup> They were most greatly concentrated in Diyarbakır, Mosul and many of the villages between Mosul and Hakkari. The different Christian groups were often in conflict with one another, although they were often forced to share the same church building to worship. Layard noted in Mosul that during a joint service between Jacobites and Nestorians both parties praying “as enemies under the same roof.”<sup>76</sup>

Western observers report that the Assyrians spoke several different dialects of the Assyrian language throughout the region, some of which were mutually unintelligible and whose distinction had deep historical roots.<sup>77</sup> In addition many Assyrians did not speak either Syriac, Turoyo, neo-Aramaic, or other Assyrian dialects. Dr. Grant reported in 1839 that none of the Jacobite Christians (of Assyrian origin) of “[Diyarbakır], Mardin, [and] Mosul, speak the language of the Nestorians, Arabic being their common medium of communication.”<sup>78</sup> Many Assyrians also spoke various Kurdish dialects, probably mostly Kurmanji towards the west and Sorani towards the east, as is indicated by Asahel Grant.<sup>79</sup> This is an indication that the Assyrians were largely confined to their individual and somewhat isolated communities and did not interact greatly with each other.

The Nestorian patriarch, who held the title of Mar Shimun, held the greatest ecclesiastical authority in the Nestorian church (also known as the Church of the East)

---

<sup>75</sup> George Percy Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals* (London: J. Masters, 1852), 1: 174-176.

<sup>76</sup> John Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations*, 54.

<sup>77</sup> Arthur John Maclean, *Grammar of the Dialects of Vernacular Syriac* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1895), xv-xvi.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Dr. Asahel Grant, Diyarbakır, June 24, 1839, *Missionary Herald* 36 (1840), 130.

<sup>79</sup> *Missionary Herald* 37 (1841): 117.

and resided in Qodchanis near Hakkari. Smith and Dwight estimate some forty thousand families to have been under his control in the Hakkari region alone.<sup>80</sup> However, the ethnic Assyrians in Tiyyari, Tkhouma, Aşıta and a number of other Assyrian villages, despite being almost entirely Nestorian Christians, were governed by *meliks*, or tribal leaders and were thus not entirely under the authority of the Mar Shimun. While they regarded the Mar Shimun at Qodchanis as their spiritual leader, they appeared to make their political decisions independently, although they may have sought his symbolic approval on occasion to legitimate some decisions. The Mar Shimun would frequently visit the Tiyyari region and generally had good relations with the *meliks*. One of the *meliks* of Tiyyari provided refuge for the Mar Shimun in 1841 after his house was burned by a band of Muslim Kurds from Hakkari.<sup>81</sup>

The paucity of sources makes it difficult to establish definite trends in the relations between the Assyrian Christians and the Muslim and Yazidi Kurds throughout southeastern Anatolia and Iraq. Yet it can generally be said that in areas where tribal rivalry was intense and seminomadic Kurdish groups competed for space, the Assyrian Christians often became targets of raids. In regions where the Kurdish groups were more united, Assyrian groups enjoyed more protection, provided they paid tribute to their Kurdish overlords. In Hakkari, the Assyrians had a natural geographic protection from the seminomadic Kurdish groups and were able to acquire the protection of the *mir* of Hakkari. It is likely on account of the Hakkari region's physical isolation from trans migrations that the Mar Shimun based his patriarchate there. Henry Ross wrote that

---

<sup>80</sup> Smith and Dwight, *Missionary Researches in Armenia*, 376.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from Dr. Asahel Grant, Aşıta, September 1842, *Missionary Herald* 39 (1843), 67.

Nurullah Bey of Hakkari “had always seemed on good terms with” the Mar Shimun. When he traveled to Erzurum in 1840 to meet with the *vali* to “tender his allegiance” he “delegated his authority to the Patriarch who administered the district until his return.”<sup>82</sup>

The Yazidis of Sinjar had friendly relations with the Assyrians. Before the 1830s the chief of the Yazidi shaykhs of Sinjar used to annually visit the Assyrian town of Alqosh, where the Chaldean Iliyas line of patriarchs (the Catholic rivals of the patriarchs in Qodshanis) had resided for centuries before moving to Baghdad to seek official protection in the early nineteenth century,<sup>83</sup> to receive “the blessing of the Nestorian [Chaldean] patriarch.”<sup>84</sup> In other areas where the Kurds ruled semiautonomously, such as Amadiya and Cizre, there were other pockets of Assyrians with multiple religious traditions.

The Kurdish groups seemed to give little importance as to the religious affiliations of the Assyrian Christians provided they did not interfere with the Kurds’ political aims. In fact they may have regarded religious diversity as a positive aspect of the Assyrians since it created multiple religious leaderships who competed for followers and funds, which in turn increased the demand for protection and the ability of the Kurds to collect higher fees from them. Furthermore religious divisions kept the Assyrians divided and unable to mobilize their forces.

The question remains what factor in particular triggered the crisis between the Muslim Kurds and Assyrians especially in the mountains to the south of Hakkari. The

---

<sup>82</sup> Ross, *Letters from the East*, 64.

<sup>83</sup> Letter from Justin Perkins, Urmiya, *Missionary Herald* 34 (1838), 459; Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 209-213, 296-298.

<sup>84</sup> Ghugas Injijian, cited in Henry A. Homes, “The Sect of Yezidies of Mesopotamia,” *The American Biblical Repository* 7 (April 1842): 351.

missionaries have commonly been blamed for exacerbating the conflict between the Kurds and the Assyrians. Missionary fever had caught hold among many Protestants in the US and Britain at exactly the same time that the Ottoman state was trying to centralize control on its periphery in the 1820s and 1830s. The excitement of western expansion and exploration spurred the missionaries to sow the seeds of their belief in hitherto untilled soil. In addition they believed that the Assyrian Christians, who dwelt among Arabs, Kurds, Persians, and Turks, would make good potential missionaries themselves since they could proselytize an ethnically diverse population.<sup>85</sup>

Western missionaries first began surveying Eastern Anatolia, western Iran, the Caucasus, and northern Iraq in the 1830s. Smith and Dwight traveled throughout the area between 1831 and 1832 and established a missionary base at which to preach to the Nestorian Christians at Urmiye, in Iran. Justin Perkins traveled to Urmiye in 1834 where he stayed intermittently for over thirty years. Dr. Asahel Grant (hereafter referred to as Dr. Grant) was an American missionary and the third known Westerner to enter the mountains of Hakkari. He was preceded by Tavernier in 1699 and Friedrich Schultz, who was sponsored by the academy of Paris to undertake an expedition to Hakkari in 1829, but was killed by Kurds in Hakkari on suspicion of being a foreign spy.<sup>86</sup> It is then quite remarkable that Asahel Grant was apparently able to establish a good relationship with the *mir* of Hakkari, Nurullah Bey, whom Layard accuses of being the killer of Schultz.<sup>87</sup> Grant refers to him as his “old friend,”<sup>88</sup> and managed to establish positive

---

<sup>85</sup> John Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, 72.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>87</sup> Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 383.

<sup>88</sup> Asahel Grant, *The Nestorians*, 104.

relationships with a number of other Kurds and Assyrian Christians, both the *meliks* of the Tiyari region and the ecclesiastical leaders, in the region.

The massacres of the Nestorians cannot be understood without considering the multiple conflicts taking place in the region. Each conflict seemed either to trigger a new one or to escalate preexisting tensions into a conflict in such a way that the ultimate result was the massacre of thousands of Nestorian Christians and the emergence of Bedr Khan Bey as the most powerful Kurdish elite in southeastern Anatolia and northern Iraq.

The first significant conflict was between different Kurdish tribal groups on the Ottoman-Persian border. First a famine hit the region in 1840, forcing many to migrate in search of food and pasture for their flocks.<sup>89</sup> Southgate believes that some four to five thousand Kurds in Diyarbakır perished as a result of the famine. He believed that the Armenians were affected by the famine as well, but that they were more cared for by their own.<sup>90</sup> Also in the early fall of 1840, members of the Zeylanlı and Celali tribal confederations, which resided primarily in Iran, crossed into Ottoman territory near Van and Beyazıt and raided a number of villages, destroying property and stealing flocks and crops.<sup>91</sup> The precise motives of these raids are not specified, but they do not seem to have been much different from those of earlier periods that involved simply tribal rivalry. Conflicts between Kurdish groups in that region were expected and nothing out of the ordinary. When the Kurds of Berwari, due south of Tiyari, forbade the mountain

---

<sup>89</sup> Journal of Doctor Grant Among the Mountain Nestorians, *Missionary Herald* 38 (June, 1842), 209-211.

<sup>90</sup> Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian [Jacobite] Church*, 100.

<sup>91</sup> BBA, C.HR 170/8495 5 Recep 1256/2 September 1840; BBA, C.HR 171/8507, 15 Şevval 1256/12 October 1840.

Assyrians from using the region for pasture, tensions escalated into violent conflict,<sup>92</sup> although this particular incident was significant enough to heighten tensions between the Ottoman state and Iran. Locals near the border began to fear that another conflict between the two states was imminent. Grant writes in July 1841 that the Kurds in Hakkari “confidently believed” that Persia was making “preparation[s] for a war with Turkey [which was]...about to commence.” So much was their belief that they braced themselves for a Persian attack by “renounc[ing] their shortlived [*sic*], nominal allegiance to Turkey, and...form[ed] an alliance with Persia.” He adds optimistically that the war would give “the Koords and Nestorians... a common enemy to fight” and help them “more easily settle their own quarrels.”<sup>93</sup>

Although a war between the Ottoman and Persian states did not materialize, it may have either caused a division or exacerbated preexisting tensions between Nurullah Bey and his nephew Suleiman Bey. Suleiman was the son of the former *mir* of Hakkari, but on his death Nurullah gained the support of locals and seized control illegitimately. After international tensions flared, Nurullah accused Suleiman Bey of taking advantage of the situation to usurp his authority. Suleiman Bey managed to enlist the support of the Mar Shimun against Nurullah and asked Bedr Khan and Khan Mahmud for additional support, which they refused to give.<sup>94</sup> Yet Nurullah opted to not kill Suleiman Bey for fear that he would provoke a segment of the Kurdish population in Hakkari to undertake reprisals against him thereby further weakening his power. So he kept him under close

---

<sup>92</sup> FO 78/2628, Erzerum, August 16, 1841, Brant to Palmerston, cited in Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 196, 213, ft. 1.

<sup>93</sup> Dr. Grant and Mr. Hinsdale, July 7, 1841, *Missionary Herald* 38 (Dec. 1842), 496.

<sup>94</sup> Dündar Alikılıç, “Hakkari Beyliğinin Yıkılış Etkenleri” [Factors of the Fall of the Hakkari Beylik], Paper presented at the Van Gölü Havzası Symposium, June 6-8, 2007.



watch.<sup>95</sup>

Nurullah saw the Mar Shimun's decision to side against him and refuse to pay him tribute—as had been his long held custom—as betrayal. In response he sought reprisals against him and other Nestorians loyal to him. In early October 1841 Nurullah managed to rally the support of Kurdish groups from Van, Cizre, and Hakkari to “subdue” the Nestorians loyal to Suleiman and the Mar Shimun. The Mar Shimun's house was burned and he was forced to take refuge in Diz.<sup>96</sup> The force tried to penetrate the tribal Assyrians in the Tiyari region but were pushed back. The mountain Nestorians retaliated by invading the district of Berwer to the south and driving away flocks, but “without further bloodshed.”<sup>97</sup>

During the political commotion in Hakkari another conflict was occurring between Bedr Khan Bey of Cizre and the Ottoman state. Since the Ottomans' embarrassing defeat at the hand of Ibrahim Paşa in 1839, the state had begrudgingly recognized the authority of Bedr Khan over Cizre and its environs in the region of Bohtan and held back from launching a full invasion of his territory for fear of sparking further crisis in a region over which they had only tenuous control. Yet, in order to prevent Bedr Khan from expanding his base of power and wealth, Ottoman officials attempted to divide his domain between the *valis* of Diyarbakır and Mosul. Cizre had long been under the jurisdiction of the *eyalet* of Diyarbakır. However, Ince Bayraktar Muhammad Paşa, the *vali* of Mosul who had proven himself to be a formidable foe of the semiindependent

---

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Laurie and Azaria Smith, *Missionary Herald* 41 (1845), 120-122.

<sup>96</sup> Letter from Dr. Grant, Mosul, October 9, 1841, *Missionary Herald* 38 (1841), 90; Laurie and Smith, *Missionary Herald* 41 (1845), 121.

<sup>97</sup> Letter from Dr. Grant, Mosul, November 15, 1841, *Missionary Herald* 38 (1842), 201.

Kurdish groups, ambitiously tried to convince the Sublime Porte to have Cizre placed under his jurisdiction. According to Percy Badger, the *vali* of Mosul sought to seize Cizre by convincing Said Bey, the nephew of Bedr Khan, that he would place him in power if he killed his uncle.<sup>98</sup> However, Bedr Khan was able to escape.

It is commonly believed that Grant's decision to have a mission home built in Aṣita in 1842 sparked fears among Kurds. Sarah Shields refers to this building as the "final straw" that escalated the tensions between the Kurds and tribal Assyrians to violence.<sup>99</sup> Not all believed this. Percy Badger, Grant's Anglican rival, baselessly accuses Grant of naively suiting the Kurds' interests of installing a fortress in the independent Assyrian enclave that would assist their eventual takeover of the region.<sup>100</sup> Of course the building may indeed have aroused suspicions. Nurullah Bey wrote to Grant informing him that many Kurds thought the building to be a fortress to be used to strengthen the Assyrians' military advantage, while others thought it to be a bazaar that would take away business from local merchants. Yet Grant managed to allay his fears and even wrote an official statement that he would not be involved in any government or market affairs, with which Nurullah seemed "satisfied."<sup>101</sup>

The Assyrian Christians became increasingly divided between 1841 and 1843 and began to experience internal conflicts that weakened them at a most inopportune moment. First the Mar Shimun was fighting off the intrigues of the Catholics who tried to persuade him to enter into communion with Rome, which would have effectively forfeited his

---

<sup>98</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, 1: 185.

<sup>99</sup> Sarah Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 55.

<sup>100</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, 1: 186.

<sup>101</sup> Letter from Dr. Grant, December 26, 1842, *Missionary Herald* 39 (1843), 318.

ecclesiastical independence. Mutran Yusef, the Chaldean bishop of Amadiya, and a Dominican monk, went to Aṣita to try to persuade the Mar Shimun and several of his clergy through dialogue, bribery, and “political assistance from France,” to “submit to the Roman See.” However, being under no duress he refused.<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless the incident shows that Catholic missionaries were indeed active in the region and that the Mar Shimun faced competition with them for members and the collection of money.

One of the Nestorian Assyrian *meliks* Shemasha Hinno of Lezan, located a couple of miles east of Aṣita, was at odds with the Mar Shimun over a number of policy issues. In addition he was not particularly keen on the Assyrians dwelling in nearby Tiyari, located some ten miles to the north. When the Mar Shimun excommunicated Shemasha for his disobedience and tried to have him banished, he rebelled and wrote to Bedr Khan informing him of his desire to join him against the Mar Shimun. Bedr Khan was elated at the news and sent him gifts and exempted him from the payment of a protection fee. Kusha Jindo, another Nestorian from Salaberka, located a couple of miles from Lezan, also fell out of favor with the Nestorian patriarch and swore his allegiance to Nurallah Bey of Hakkari against the Mar Shimun, which Nurullah accepted.<sup>103</sup> The rivalries between the Nestorian Assyrians in the various mountain villages further weakened their position vis-à-vis the Kurds.

The Mar Shimun had long had rivals within the Nestorian community but had generally been able to protect himself from their intrigues by paying a protection fee to client Christian and Muslim tribes. His headquarters in mountainous Hakkari was further

---

<sup>102</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, 1: 186-187; Letter from Dr. Grant and Hinsdale, November 3, 1842, Aṣita, *Missionary Herald* 39 (1843), 210-211.

<sup>103</sup> Laurie and Smith, *Missionary Herald* 41 (1845), 118.

protection from Assyrian groups against him. But why did the Mar Shimun become hostile to the Kurds? It is highly likely that the advent of the missionaries increased his confidence that he would receive backing from foreign powers. Although all Assyrians were technically under the jurisdiction of the Armenian *millet*, they operated rather freely since they were very distant from Armenian authority. In addition the areas where they were concentrated were not populated by many Armenians who could keep them in check. The independence of the Mar Shimun, however, came at a cost. He was forced to fend for himself in many ways in a society that was politically divided and rooted in tribalism. He lacked the guaranteed backing of the Ottoman authorities enjoyed by the Armenian patriarch of Istanbul. Hence he held out the hope that deliverance from his Kurdish overlords would be achieved through his alliance with foreigners, which only aroused the Kurds to suspect his true political aims.

Another conflict was that between the state and Bedr Khan. The *vali* of Diyarbakır, Zekeriya Paşa noted in June 1841 that Bedr Khan had some thirty to forty thousand soldiers under his command.<sup>104</sup> Between 1839 and 1842, the *vali* of Diyarbakır was changed four times, an indication that internal politics continued to hinder the implementation of full state control in the city.<sup>105</sup> In Mosul, in contrast, Ince Bayraktar Mehmet Paşa had a firm grasp over the city and managed to subdue the elite Jalili family who had been in power in the city for over a century, as well as several semiautonomous tribes around the area. Because of his stronger presence in the region, the revenue that he generated was much greater, and consequently his army was much more powerful. For

---

<sup>104</sup>Diyarbakır *vali* Zekeriya Paşa to the Grand Vizier Topal-İzzet Mehmet Paşa, BBA, İ.MVL 29/490-24, 1 Cemaziyülevvel 1257/21 June 1841.

<sup>105</sup> Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır*, 136.

this reason the Sublime Porte agreed in June 1841 to have Cizre removed from the jurisdiction of the floundering Diyarbakır *eyalet* and placed under the jurisdiction of the *vali* of Mosul.<sup>106</sup>

Almost immediately after making the jurisdictional change, Bedr Khan wrote a letter of protest to the *vali* of Diyarbakır informing him that the *vali* of Mosul had tried to extirpate the *mütesellims* of Zakho and Tel Afar and threatened their families. He demanded the payment of high taxes and restricted the passage of seminomadic tribes, disrupting their livelihoods in some cases.<sup>107</sup> In addition a petition signed by the *mütesellim*, *kadı*, and *muhtar* of Cizre was sent to the *vali* of Diyarbakır, which was then sent to the Sublime Porte, which complained of further excesses committed by the *vali* of Mosul. It made the case that an agreement had been reached in 1836 between Reşid Paşa and the Azizan family that Cizre would be under the jurisdiction of the Diyarbakır *eyalet* and requested that the Sublime Porte honor it. The petitioners made sure to swear their allegiance to the sultan.<sup>108</sup>

The authorities were reluctant to comply with Bedr Khan's request to transfer Cizre back to the Diyarbakır *eyalet*. They were well aware that his insistence that Cizre be placed outside the jurisdictional authority of Ince Bayraktar Mehmet Paşa and back under the authority of a much weaker *eyalet* of Diyarbakır was a ploy to enable him to increase the radius of territory that he controlled. However, the near simultaneous revolts of Khan Mahmud of Müküs and Ismail Ağa of Amadiya against the central state in early

---

<sup>106</sup> BBA, C.DH. 287/14313, 1 Cemaziyülevvel 1257/21 June 1841.

<sup>107</sup> Letter from Bedr Khan Bey to the *vali* of Diyarbakır, cited in Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri*, 66-68.

<sup>108</sup> Letter from the inhabitants of Cizre to the Sublime Porte, cited in *ibid.*, 68-69.

1842, which were not mutually coordinated, made the Ottomans second-guess their policy initiative to subdue Bedr Khan. They feared that if Bedr Khan were to ally with the Kurdish rebels the revolt might expand to overwhelming proportions. Luckily for the state, Bedr Khan hesitated to join forces with the rebel *beys*. Bedr Khan had a negative history with the family of Khan Mahmud, particularly his brother Abdal Han, against whom he allied with the Ottomans when they revolted in 1838. The Ottomans suspected Bedr Khan of supporting Ismail Ağa, but he vehemently denied this.<sup>109</sup>

The revolts of Khan Mahmud and Ismail Ağa at first proved difficult for the Ottomans to contain. The Helaci and Rojeki tribes under the leadership of the *vali* of Erzurum, *kaymakam* of Muş in conjunction with the Şikaki and Mihamdi tribes in the Mahmudi tried to take Gevaş but were forced to retreat to Tatvan by Khan Mahmud and his brother Han Abdal, who had the backing of a number of Kurds from Muş.<sup>110</sup> Their increasing fear that Bedr Khan would participate led them to give in slightly to the Cizre *bey's* demands. Authorities told him that they would reconsider their decision to place Cizre under the jurisdiction of Mosul.

However, once the Ottomans managed to gain the upper hand over the rebel Kurds, Bedr Khan Bey acquiesced to Ottoman demands. He assured the *valis* of Erzurum and Diyarbakır that he would make an effort to put down the revolts, particularly that of Khan Mahmud, but he was slow to act.<sup>111</sup> The Ottomans were able to contain but not fully suppress Khan Mahmud and Ismail Ağa. Khan Mahmud's main advantage was his brother's fortification at Mahmudi. Ismail Ağa managed to outbid Ottoman forces by

---

<sup>109</sup> Hakan, 136.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 141-142.

<sup>111</sup> BBA, İ.MVL 39/729, 9 Rebiyülevvel 1258/20 April 1842, cited in *ibid.*, 138-139.

securing the alliances of a number of *shaykh* and *ağas* throughout Hakkari and Soran.

In late 1842 Ottoman authorities decided to keep Cizre under the jurisdiction of Mosul and Ince Bayraktar in power since the revolt of the Kurds in Müküs and Amadiya continued to pose a threat and the *vali* of Diyarbakır was weak.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore they kept Ince Bayraktar at Mosul while replacing Vecih Paşa of Diyarbakır. Bedr Khan was incensed at the political maneuvering of the Ottomans, whom he now believed were unwilling to actually help him. When he threatened rebellion in 1843 he caught the attention of the Sublime Porte and the Sultan who strongly urged the transfer of Cizre back to Diyarbakır in order to placate him.<sup>113</sup> Yet by then the Kurdish *bey* of Cizre's cynicism at Ottoman governance had grown to the extent that he no longer desired to deal with their game-playing. In addition the alliance that he managed to forge with Khan Mahmud of Müküs gave him a new surge of confidence.

One of the most provocative acts of the mountain Assyrians, according to the *vali* of Erzurum, Kamil Paşa, was their invasion of the Kurdish village of Sersepi, in which they killed a number of Kurds, including two Kurdish *seyyids* (supposed descendants of the prophet Muhammad), and converted a mosque into a church. The bloodied shirts of the victims that the relatives of the *seyyids* sent to Bedr Khan provided him with a solid justification for invasion and a symbol around which to stir the collective sense of outrage among the Kurds.<sup>114</sup> According to Ali Paşa, the *vali* of Baghdad, Khan told him:

The Tiyari Nestorians killed about fifty *seyyids* [likely using the term *seyyid* here to bestow honor on all Kurdish victims of Assyrian violence] and they did this

---

<sup>112</sup> Hakan, 152-155.

<sup>113</sup> Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikler*, 75-76.

<sup>114</sup> Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri*, 77; also see Kamil Paşa, *vali* of Erzurum to Grand Vizier Mehmet Emin Rauf Paşa, BBA, İ.MSM 48/1278, 1 Şevval 1259/27 August 1843.

with the provocation of the English government. They did not submit to the *bey* of Hakkari and took his possessions right in front of him. I knew that this would have a bad result and that it would be a headache for the Ottoman state. Since it is impossible to move cannons and carriages through the region and since the revolts are increasing day by day, I no longer have the patience and can no longer tolerate this. Hence in the name of the sultan I am setting some limits [to their power].<sup>115</sup>

It is intriguing that Bedr Khan claimed to be expanding his power in the name of the sultan even though there is no direct evidence that the sultan and Sublime Porte sponsored, let alone sanctioned, his move against the Assyrians.

Bedr Khan was undoubtedly one of the shrewdest Kurdish political leaders of his time and place. The political discourse that he appealed to in his letters and his political actions show that he was an attentive observer of the political and social environment around him and had a keen sense of who his potential enemies and allies were. His apparent acumen suggests that he had a political vision that was more carefully articulated than that of other Kurdish leaders. It was within the parameters of this vision that he specified targets for violence.

#### The Invasion of Diz, Tişari, and Aşita

Bedr Khan Bey commenced his military campaign against the Assyrian Christians in the mountainous enclave of Tişari in mid-July of 1843. He had been planning the invasion for months and patiently awaited the most advantageous moment to move his men into the region, a moment when he would be least vulnerable from defections either from other Kurdish *beys* or from Kurds within his own ranks. In December 1842 Bedr

---

<sup>115</sup> Ali Paşa, the *vali* of Baghdad, BBA, İ.MSM 48/1229, 9 Şevval 1259/2 November 1843.



Khan, his general Zenal Bey, and Ismail Ağa of Amadiya, who had recently escaped from captivity in Mosul, went throughout Berwari attempting to rally Kurdish groups against offending mountain Assyrians. Bedr Khan Bey even sent the Mar Shimun a letter bidding him join him and his forces. The Mar Shimun rejected his request and informed the *vali* of Mosul of Bedr Khan Bey's intentions. According to Badger, the *vali* of Mosul used this as an opportunity to build an alliance with the Mar Shimun and win over Tiyari.<sup>116</sup>

After securing the vital alliances of Nurullah Bey of Hakkari, Ismail Ağa of Amadiya, and Khan Mahmud of Müküs, Bedr Khan Bey felt himself sufficiently prepared to confront the formidable Nestorian foe. Dr. Grant makes it apparent in his letters that he was aware of Khan Bey's plans to invade Tiyari a few weeks in advance. He reports that Khan Bey had “spoken of [his] building in Asheta” and identified it as a threat. But upon meeting Grant personally, Bedr Khan Bey assured him that his mission house would be spared destruction and that all Assyrians who took refuge with him would not be harmed.<sup>117</sup> According to Percy Badger, Dr. Grant had heard of Bedr Khan Bey's plans to invade the Assyrian mountain villages as early as December 1842 and began transporting many of his belongings from Aşita to Mosul in anticipation of catastrophe.<sup>118</sup>

Bedr Khan Bey began his invasion from the north at Diz, which had served as residence of the Mar Shimun and his family since his house was torched in 1841. He

---

<sup>116</sup> Percy George Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, 1: 188.

<sup>117</sup> Letters from Dr. Grant, July 5, 1843, Aşita, *Missionary Herald* 39 (November, 1843), 435.

<sup>118</sup> Percy George Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, 1: 188.

then marched his forces south to Tiyyari and Aşıta. Despite their attempts to defend themselves, the Assyrian villagers were overwhelmed by the joint Kurdish force. Bedr Khan Bey and his men were reportedly excessively brutal, destroying homes, mutilating corpses, and throwing them into the Zab river. Those whom they did not kill, they held as captives. Although the Mar Shimun managed to escape and flee to Mosul with his brother, his scribe, and an entourage of three or four men, his mother was captured, dashed to pieces, and tossed in the river.<sup>119</sup> They also captured his niece and held her as a slave.<sup>120</sup> Many Assyrians were able to flee into the mountains and destroyed bridges to keep the Kurdish force from pursuing them.

Not all Assyrians in the mountains were pursued by the joint Kurdish force. Bedr Khan spared the inhabitants of Zawitha and left their possessions and inhabitants untouched. The *rais* of the village apparently "rendered some service" to Bedr Khan in order to secure his preservation.<sup>121</sup> The Assyrians in Tkhuma sided with the Kurds against the Assyrians in Tiyyari. Their involvement may have been linked partially to their historic rivalry, but it is also likely that they pledged allegiance to the Kurds out of fear. An Assyrian *melik* explained to Layard: "it is true...that when Nur-Ullah Bey [of Hakkari] joined Bedar Khan Bey in the great massacre, the people of Tkhoma marched with the Kurds against us; but could they do otherwise? For they feared the chief of Hakkari."<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri*, 78; Letters from Dr. Grant, July 5, 1843, Aşıta, *Missionary Herald* 39 (November, 1843), 436-437.

<sup>120</sup> Halil Kamil Paşa to Grand Vizier Mehmet Emin Rauf Paşa, BOA, İ.MSM. 48/1228, 9 Recep 1259/5 August 1843, p. 9.

<sup>121</sup> Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 136.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

According to Asahel Grant, Ottoman forces dispatched by the *vali* of Mosul were present just south of the Tiyyari region at the time of the violent engagement. However, they did not participate in the violence. Christian Rassam, the British Vice-Consul in Mosul and brother-in-law of the Anglican missionary George Percy Badger, believes that the Ottoman force was there to strengthen Bedr Khan Bey's forces and block the Assyrians from escaping capture.<sup>123</sup> Indeed Ince Bayraktar Mehmet Paşa may have been intent on subduing the independent Assyrian enclave as part of his centralization campaign, but there is no evidence that he had coordinated the attack with Bedr Khan. Furthermore there is no evidence that his forces were ordered to partake in the violent attacks against the Assyrians. Given the state of the relationship between the Ottomans and the British at the time, it is likely that the Ottoman force was present to contain the violence and keep it from spreading further south in order to show itself to be maintaining order. The British at the time backed a strong central Ottoman state and monitored political activity on its periphery to make sure that the Ottomans kept opposition movements in check. Fearing embarrassment and vulnerability, Ottoman leaders were intent on appearing to be complying with British suggestions, even if they did sometimes secretly pursue their own agendas. Yet the Ottoman force did not invade Tiyyari primarily because it did not want to spark further troubles with Bedr Khan Bey, who was capable of rallying the support of Kurds in the south against the Ottoman state.

Some Assyrians managed to assemble a resistance in Aşita in late October and early November 1843 to push back the men of Bedr Khan Bey and Zenal Bey. They

---

<sup>123</sup> FO 195/228 Mosul, 16 July 1843, Rassam to Canning, cited in Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 198, 213, ft. 5, 216.

managed to wound Zenal Bey and kill approximately sixty of his men. However, with the help of Bedr Khan, Zenal soon gathered a force of two hundred armed cavalry to stamp out the rebels and regain control over Aşita by capturing the fortress-like mission house and using it to their strategic advantage. At the behest of Consul Rassam, the Mar Shimun sent a secret message to his followers in the mountains, telling them to stand down and avoid all conflict with Kurdish groups, whether they be Bedr Khan's forces or agriculturalists and pastoralists in Berwari, in order to not provoke the stronger Kurdish force to undertake more violence. Consul Rassam lamented the meager attempt of the Assyrians to beat back the Kurds remarking, "thus, these poor Christians are instigated to bring ruin upon themselves by a few designing men whose only object is self aggrandisement."<sup>124</sup>

Stories of brutality were abundant among survivors. They reported that the joint Kurdish force under Bedr Khan would kill women and children, burn people alive, and torture captives. In addition they reported that the Kurds burnt churches, demolished homes, and ravaged fields. Assyrians fleeing to the mountains destroyed bridges in order to prevent the Kurdish aggressors from pursuing them. The exact number of victims is perhaps impossible to determine; however, figures range from 3,800<sup>125</sup> to as high as ten thousand.<sup>126</sup> Thousands were taken into captivity. Bedr Khan also attacked Jacobite Christians in Jebel Tur, who were also reputedly self-governing in much the same way as

---

<sup>124</sup> FO 228: Rassam to Canning, disp. no. 11. Mosul, 31 October 1843, cited in Salahi Ramsdan Sonyel, *The Assyrians of Turkey: Victims of Major Power Policy* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 2001), 31.

<sup>125</sup> *The London Times*, 6 September 1843.

<sup>126</sup> Hassan Arafa, *The Kurds: A Historical and Political Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 23; *The Home Friend* (London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1854), 76.

the Nestorian Christians in Tiyyari. He killed the Jacobite Primate of Midyat and subjected much of the population to forced labor.<sup>127</sup>

### Negotiating New Power Sharing

British officials feared that if the Ottoman authorities did not intervene quickly and keep Bedr Khan from assuming greater power and killing and enslaving more Christians, that Russia or France might consider exploiting the situation to their own economic and political advantages on the global playing field. Hence it was not long after the first wave of violence in the region that Stratford Canning and Christian Rassam strongly urged the Ottomans to ramp up their efforts to contain Bedr Khan and prevent further bloodshed of Christians. Yet the Ottoman authorities repeatedly insisted that Bedr Khan was too powerful for them to overcome easily and that even if they did manage to bring him down they would continue to face rebellion from other Kurdish *beys*. Consequently both the Ottomans and the British conceded that the best option was to pursue open negotiations with Bedr Khan to try to persuade him at least to free Christian captives and allow them to return to their lands.

Although Bedr Khan enjoyed more power in southeastern Anatolia than any other member of the Kurdish elite had done over the past century, he sensed that his power was delicately balanced and that many Kurdish and Assyrian strongmen were patiently awaiting the opportunity to challenge him when he was most vulnerable. Therefore he was loath to take any measures that might empower the mountain Assyrians and initially did not heed the demands of the *vali* of Mosul to release captives. Consul Rassam

---

<sup>127</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, 1: 303.

managed to persuade Bedr Khan to release only sixty captives in late 1843, but reported that there were over five hundred captives being held around Cizre.<sup>128</sup>

Bedr Khan appears to have softened his stance as a new power vacuum emerged after the untimely death early in 1844 of İnce Bayraktar Mehmet Paşa, the *vali* of Mosul whose personality was key to maintaining order in the Mosul region and parts of southeastern Anatolia. Security in the region temporarily collapsed after his death. Sabahettin Bey, the brother of İsmail Ağa of Amadiya, escaped from prison in Mosul, and subsequently rallied together *başibozuks* from Mosul, police officers from Dohuk, and tribes from the Amadiya region to rise in revolt. Bedr Khan quickly dispatched a force of five hundred soldiers to put them down, which they were able to do with relative ease. But the incident made the *bey* of Bohtan painfully aware that his power would not go uncontested even by family members of his allies and led him to begin accepting the idea that his negotiating power vis-à-vis the Ottoman state might be limited. Ironically, the incident convinced Kemal Efendi, the *vali* of Erzurum, that Bedr Khan could be a valuable asset in the region in terms of his ability to install internal security.<sup>129</sup>

Although Bedr Khan continued to balk at the idea of releasing all the Assyrian captives in his position and withdrawing his forces from the Tiyyari mountains, he began to show signs of giving in to external demands by attempting to negotiate a deal with the Mar Shimun. In March 1844, he sent the Nestorian patriarch warning him "against listening to proposals made by 'Osmanlees' who he said were notorious for lying, that if Mar Shimon would put himself in Bedr Khan Bey's hands, he should be reinstalled in the

---

<sup>128</sup> Gencer, "Merkezîyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 100-102; Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 226.

<sup>129</sup> Gencer, "Merkezîyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 106.

mountains, and all his affairs settled to his satisfaction." However, the Mar Shimun informed him that he was committed to back whatever decision the Ottoman state made concerning him.<sup>130</sup>

R.W. Stevens, the British consul in Samsun, was commissioned to go with Kemal Efendi, the *vali* of Erzurum, to meet with Bedr Khan in April 1844. Stevens was generally impressed with Bedr Khan and convinced that the claims circulated by Christians and others of renewed violence against the Assyrians were unfounded and exaggerated, but he also demanded that Bedr Khan release all Christians. Bedr Khan was taken back by Stevens' demand and his overall reasoning for intervening. He was puzzled as to why the British would take so much interest in the Nestorian Christians especially when they did not come to the Kurds' aid when they were under attack by the Nestorians. The new *vali* of Mosul Şerif Paşa strongly urged Bedr Khan to comply with the British, informing him how they had helped the Ottomans drive the Egyptian governor Muhammad Ali and his forces from Syria: "if you do not leave these Christians tranquil, England will tell our government, either punish Bedr Khan Bey, or let us do so, and you may depend upon it, they will get at you, for they carried war into China 5,000 hours from their Country."<sup>131</sup>

As a result of continual pressure from the British and the Ottoman authorities, Bedr Khan became increasingly convinced that the threat to his power was potentially much greater from outside than from within and by 1845 released a great number of

---

<sup>130</sup> FO 195/228 Mosul, 23 March 1844, Stevens to Canning, cited in Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 232, 237, ft. 37.

<sup>131</sup> FO 195/228 Stevens to Canning, 30 April 1844, cited in Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq*, 57.

prisoners, allowed many Assyrian Nestorians to return to their lands, and withdrew many of his forces from the Tiya region. In exchange the British and Ottomans appeared to be content to leave Bedr Khan alone as long as he maintained peace in the region.

Bedr Khan governed based on a set of more profound political and economic principles than other Kurdish *beys* both past and present. He had constructed two factories at Cizre to produce weapons and ammunition and sent individuals to Europe to learn about Western military technology and organization. Bedr Khan was quick to rebuild the ravaged economy around him. Consul Rassam wrote that that Bedr Khan had already begun rebuilding villages in Jebel Tor in early 1844 and bringing their fields under cultivation. He remarked that an "air of prosperity pervaded the mountainous region."<sup>132</sup> According to Armenian observers, Bedr Khan sought to establish a sea-faring business in Lake Van and replacing sailboats with regular ships to better connect the riparian cities.<sup>133</sup> Bedr Khan also had coinage minted and circulated with his name and title *Emir-i Bohtan Bedr Khan* inscribed on it.<sup>134</sup>

He was a staunch Sunni Muslim and relied on his interpretation of *sharia* law to orient his politics. He was a deft negotiator and had a keen sense of how to balance the competing forces around him. British missionaries who visited the region in 1845 reported that "nearly every chief in northern Koordistan came to make their respects to him, bringing him presents of money, horses, mules, and other valuable property."

---

<sup>132</sup> FO 195/228, Rassam to Canning, 13 January 1844, cited in Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq*, 225, ft. 94.

<sup>133</sup> Shahbazian, *Kyurto-Hay Badmutyun*, 88.

<sup>134</sup> Malmisani, *Cizra Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhani Ailesi Derneği'nin Tutanakları* [The Bedr Khan Family of Cizre/Bohtan and Proceedings of Their Institution] (Istanbul: Berdan Matbaası, 2000), 51.



Additionally they reported that Bedr Khan managed to establish security in his domain to a much greater degree than existed in other Kurdish-inhabited regions:

The guilty under his government find no escape. Bribery, favoritism, &c., which too often, in these countries, pervert the course of justice, and nullify the force of law, are unknown here.<sup>135</sup>

Additionally Bedr Khan appeared to help settle disputes between Christians. When Assyrians of Tkhuma raided other Assyrians returning to their homes in Tiyyari in late 1844, Bedr Khan sent a letter to the Tkhuma inhabitants, warning them that he would "proceed against them if they did not desist." Stevens commended Bedr Khan for his efforts remarking:

the Buhtan Chief deserves some credit for his conduct on this occasion. It is rather discouraging to see that, now the Mohammedans have abandoned their persecutions in the mountains, the Christians are beginning to fight among themselves.<sup>136</sup>

Bedr Khan viewed religious diversity as a significant source of political division and favored a policy of forced assimilation. He sought to convert Yazidis to Islam by both persuasion and threat of violence, and converted many of his Nestorian captives to Islam.<sup>137</sup> According to Shahbazian, a Armenian member of the Dashnak party who wrote about Bedr Khan in 1911 based on earlier Armenian sources, Bedr Khan "viewed the Kurds and the Armenians equally," basing his belief "on the contradictory idea that they were [originally] of one blood" but had become divided religiously and ethnically. He believed that by erasing their religious distinction he could blend them with the Kurds to

---

<sup>135</sup> Letter from Dr. Wright and Mr. Breath, *Missionary Herald* 42 (1846), 381.

<sup>136</sup> FO 195/228: Stevens to Canning, disp., Mosul, 19 October 1844, cited in Sonyel, *The Assyrians of Turkey*, 38.

<sup>137</sup> See Badger, *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, 1: 113; Letter from Dr. Wright and Mr. Breath, *Missionary Herald* 42 (1846), 381.

create a nation of "warriors." The Armenians did not share Bedr Khan's vision and sided with the Ottoman army against him in 1847.<sup>138</sup>

By 1846, Bedr Khan had gained greater power than any Kurdish *bey* in southeastern Anatolia in the previous hundred years. His domain, which was based on Cizre, extended from Mardin in the west to Nehri in the east, Gevaş (on Lake Van) in the north to Sinjar in the south. However, the towns of Soran, Muş, Bitlis, Van, Diyarbakır, and Mosul remained outside his control.

### Further Loss of Control

Bedr Khan and the Ottoman state continued to have competing interests despite reaching a compromise. Although both entities avoided direct conflict with each other, they tried to influence the Kurdish *beys* living next to the territory held by Bedr Khan. In 1845 the Ottoman state began trying to impose the *tanzimat* reforms in the *eyalets* of Diyarbakır, Erzurum, and Van. The aim of the reforms was to extend greater control over the periphery, generate more revenue from taxes, and modernize the military. To accomplish this, the state created a greater number of administrative divisions in the *eyalets* and appointed outside officials to govern over the land instead of local families. Additionally the state undertook cadastral surveys to assess the ability of the inhabitants to pay taxes and began to lift many of the tax exemptions and exemptions from military service that some Kurdish groups had previously enjoyed.

The state's reforms were met with opposition both from the traditional power-holding classes who felt that the reforms threatened their power and from the religious

---

<sup>138</sup> Shahbazian, *Kyurto-Hay Badmutyun*, 88.

class who felt that the reforms were based on Western innovation and ran counter to *sharia* law. Upon hearing word of the state's plan to implement the *tanzimat* in Van, Mustafa Bey, a descendent of Timur Paşa, who had served as the *vali* of Van throughout much of the late eighteenth century, spearheaded a revolt. Mustafa Bey's followers proclaimed him the new *kaymakam* in place of the Ottoman appointee Sırrı Paşa. Mustafa persuaded his followers by insisting that the *tanzimat* would turn them into "Franks."<sup>139</sup> He won the support of many landholders by telling them that the state intended to dissolve their *yurtluk-ocaklık* holdings. Most notably Mustafa Bey had the strong support of Khan Mahmud, the *bey* of Müküs, who provided him crucial military backing. Khan Mahmud and his brother Han Abdal, the *bey* of Mahmudi, patrolled the area around Van to prevent outsiders from penetrating the city and to keep informers in the city from leaving the area to rally outside help. He captured and killed the *kethüda* of Van and an Armenian priest who tried to send messages to Erzurum petitioning for outside intervention from the state.<sup>140</sup>

The rebels in Van were able to keep the revolt secret for long enough to secure the support of a number of local men and key elites in the region. Between June and September 1845, the *vali* of Erzurum, Bekir Sami Paşa, repeatedly attempted to send military reinforcements to put down Mustafa Bey and replace him with another *kaymakam* who could command the allegiance of many of the locals. Realizing that the rebels might rally Kurdish groups from Iran to bolster their movement, Bekir Sami tried to enlist the support of local Kurdish elites from the border region who had close ties to

---

<sup>139</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 49/1231, 12 Cemaziyülahır 1261/18 June 1845, p. 10, cited in Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 118.

<sup>140</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 115-116.

border tribes. He persuaded Tayfur Bey, of the local Van family of İshak Paşa, a rival to Timur Paşa's family, to serve as the *kaymakam*, to entice locals to support the sultan, and lead an Ottoman force against the rebels. When Tayfur Bey failed to rally enough support, Bekir Sami Paşa had him removed and looked to others. He even appointed Behlül Paşa, the Kurdish *mutasarrıf* of Beyazıt who had been a key ally of the Ottoman state since the 1810s, to serve as *kaymakam* for a brief period. However, despite the fact that some Kurdish leaders were on the side of the state, the rebel force had strong local support and could not easily be overcome.<sup>141</sup> The shortage in revenue caused by the rebels' refusal to pay taxes made it difficult for the state to pay their military at Erzurum and consequently more difficult to mobilize force to put down the rebellion.<sup>142</sup>

Bedr Khan secretly supported the rebellion, which he saw as an opportunity to expand his power base, although he initially denied it to Ottoman officials.<sup>143</sup> Yet Bedr Khan's vision went beyond mere expansion into the city of Van. In early 1846 he appears to have entered into an agreement with other Kurdish elites, notably Khan Mahmud, the rebels in Van, Nuruallah Bey, several other Kurdish *beys* in Bitlis, Muş, and Hizan, and *beys* as far north as the Çıldır region, to perpetuate resistance to state centralization efforts, particularly to the *tanzimat*. Bedr Khan was to play a key role in the alliance and managed to use it to expand his influence northwards. The alliance aroused the attention of the British and Russian consuls who urged the Ottomans to take measures against it.<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 114-127.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 123-124.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>144</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 49/1235, 20 Rebiyülevvel 1262/17 April 1846.

The force of Bedr and the Kurdish alliance was sufficient to cow many leaders into submitting to him against the state. He intimidated Kurdish groups in Bitlis and Muş into backing him and the alliance over the Ottoman state. When Kurds in Kisan pushed back at Bedr Khan to the extent of wounding some of his aides in the summer of 1846, he sent a force of four hundred to burn the village of the dissenters and kill select leaders.<sup>145</sup> Additionally Şerif Bey (a descendent of the powerful Kurdish Bey Alaeddin of Muş who had risen to power in the mid-eighteenth century), who had announced his allegiance to the Ottoman state in 1845 against the rebels in Van, came to side with Bedr Khan in 1846.<sup>146</sup>

State officials met in August 1846 to discuss how to deal with Bedr Khan's expanding power base and the continued anti-*tanzimat* sentiment in the region. Officials decided that the forces at Erzurum were unreliable since many of them sympathized with the rebels, and that it would be necessary to assemble an armed force of regulars and especially *başıbozuk* irregulars from central and western Anatolia, and even the Balkans, in order to be able to engage Bedr Khan. However, at the same time, they decided to postpone any military engagement with Bedr Khan and other Kurdish rebels until after winter.<sup>147</sup>

Tensions escalated between Bedr Khan and the Assyrians when Assyrians from Baz, Jilo, and Tkhuma, whom Bedr Khan had been unable to disarm, skirmished with Kurdish villagers to the south.<sup>148</sup> This group of Assyrians allegedly raided several

---

<sup>145</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 138.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 127, 133.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>148</sup> Report from the British Vice-Consul of Mosul Christian Rassam, BBA, İ.MMS 49/1235, 19 September 1846.

Kurdish villages and killed a number of Kurds including Bedr Khan's men.<sup>149</sup> Yet the perpetration of violence and oppression was not a one-sided affair. Assyrians had been complaining increasingly of the heavy taxation imposed both by Nurullah Bey and Bedr Khan.<sup>150</sup> Additionally it was rumored that Assyrians attempting to leave Tkhuma and traverse the Berwar region to the south were being killed.<sup>151</sup>

The Mar Shimun and the Assyrians in Tkhuma had been making appeals to the *vali* of Mosul to bring them under his jurisdiction and relieve them of the burden of Bedr Khan. They promised to be loyal tax-paying subjects in exchange for his protection.<sup>152</sup> Bedr Khan appears to have begun making plans to invade the region of Tkhuma in September 1846 after Shaykh Mahmud of Mosul and Shaykh Yusuf of Zakho made a declaration of *jihad* against the Assyrians of Tkhuma and called the Bey of Buhtan to action.<sup>153</sup> The seeming success that Bedr Khan had had in expanding his power base throughout much of Eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq in 1846 gave him confidence that he would be able to stamp out the Assyrian force with near impunity.

In October and November 1846, Bedr Khan stormed the village of Tkhuma killing about one thousand individuals and forcing thousands of others to flee southward

---

<sup>149</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 49/1238, 13 Şevval 1262/4 October 1846, p. 5, cited in Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 139.

<sup>150</sup> According to British Consul Christian Rassam, the Assyrians were being taxed three times a year. Once from Nurullah and twice from Bedr Khan. See Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 245.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 240-241; the Mar Shimun made appeals as early as January 1846, BBA, A.DVN 13/64, 7 Muharrem 1262/5 January 1846, cited in Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 139.

<sup>153</sup> Report from the British Vice-Consul of Mosul Christian Rassam, BBA, İ.MMS 49/1235, 19 September 1846.

toward Mosul and eastward into Iran.<sup>154</sup> According to the *vali* of Mosul, Tayyar Paşa, some even took refuge among Kurdish tribes in the region, a further indication that severe tension between Assyrians and Kurds was mainly limited to the area between Hakkari and Amadiya.<sup>155</sup> Bedr Khan sought to decimate the villagers and completely destroy their lands. He demolished their houses, burned their fields, chopped down trees, and ruined their irrigation system.<sup>156</sup>

British officials were greatly upset by the renewed massacres of Assyrians. At the same time, even though some of them believed the state to be turning a blind eye to the incident, they were generally under the impression that the Ottomans lacked the capacity to intervene and destroy Bedr Khan's power. Nonetheless, the consuls urged the Ottomans to make immediate preparations to extend full control over Eastern Anatolia. Consul Rassam even suggested that the Ottomans try enlisting the support of the Jacobite Assyrians in Jebel Tur to help bring down Bedr Khan. They had proved to be an invaluable asset to the Ottoman military against Kör Muhammad Paşa in the 1830s and would once again prove particularly useful against Bedr Khan in 1847.<sup>157</sup>

### Declining Power in the East

The Ottomans dispatched one of their senior civil servants, Nazım Efendi, to meet with Bedr Khan in late 1846. He left Istanbul before the Tkhuma massacre occurred and arrived after it, but he was not there to discuss reparations for the Assyrians or to act on

---

<sup>154</sup> Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 246.

<sup>155</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 49/1238, 26 Şevval 1262/17 October 1846, p. 8, cited in Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 141.

<sup>156</sup> Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 244.

<sup>157</sup> FO 78/2699, Mosul, 12 December 1846, Rassam to Wellesley, cited in *ibid.*, 249, 255, ft. 23.

behalf of the British. He was there to survey the area, determine Bedr Khan's capabilities, and try to negotiate a new power-sharing agreement with the Kurdish *bey*. At the negotiating table, Bedr Khan announced his willingness to submit to the state with the hope of gaining Nazım Efendi's favor. He even told Nazım that he would be willing to make a formal submission in the presence of shaykhs, *muftis*, and other local elites.<sup>158</sup> He announced that if the state recognized his authority, he would be willing to collect taxes from the population under his jurisdiction and pay the revenue to the *vali* of Mosul, and that he would gather soldiers for the Ottoman army when required.<sup>159</sup> Nazım left Cizre believing that Bedr Khan was much weaker and more vulnerable than he appeared and that the best course of action for the state would be to leave him in power at Cizre.<sup>160</sup> However, the authorities in Istanbul, bent on centralizing control over Eastern Anatolia, dismissed Nazım Efendi's recommendation and ordered Müşir (General) Osman Paşa to march on Bedr Khan on March 17, 1847.<sup>161</sup>

Bedr Khan was said to have a force of some sixty thousand at his command,<sup>162</sup> but according to Osman Paşa, his military consisted largely of private militias who were gathered on an *ad hoc* basis and were highly unorganized.<sup>163</sup> To maintain such a large military, Bedr Khan subjected the peasantry to high taxes resulting in an overall increase of discontent with him and his rule. Between January and April, as the Ottomans were preparing for battle, an increasing number of those dwelling in Bedr Khan's domain

---

<sup>158</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 143.

<sup>159</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 49/1254, 5 Safer 1263/23 January 1847, p. 2, cited in *ibid.*, 280.

<sup>160</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 143.

<sup>161</sup> BBA, C.ZB 12/558, 29 Rebiyülevvel 1263/17 March 1847, cited in *ibid.*, 282.

<sup>162</sup> Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 252.

<sup>163</sup> Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri*, 100.



defected to the Ottoman side.

Bedr Khan resorted to an eleventh-hour effort to try to deter the Ottomans from marching on him by making an appeal to the British. He sent a letter by the hand of Shaykh Yusuf of Zakho to the British consul in Baghdad proposing a set of conditions to persuade the consul to urge the Ottomans to cease their endeavors against him. Bedr Khan stipulated that he would release all Assyrian captives, recognize the Mar Shimun as the patriarch of the Nestorian Assyrians, and regard Christians and Muslims as equals, on the condition that the British and Ottomans would no longer meddle in his affairs or those of the Assyrian inhabitants of Tiyyari and Tkuma. He also swore allegiance to the sultan and promised to carry out his decrees; however, he demanded that locals read the *khutba* in his name.<sup>164</sup>

The Ottomans pursued a two-pronged strategy in bringing down Bedr Khan. First they mobilized a force consisting of regular and irregular soldiers from Istanbul, the Arabian peninsula, Sivas, Harput, Trabzon, Aleppo, Urfa, Diyarbakır, Muş, and several other regions. Osman Paşa led the campaign against Bedr Khan from the south and Ferik Ahmet Paşa and Ferik İsmail Paşa from the north.<sup>165</sup> Second they negotiated with Kurdish *beys* close to Bedr Khan and attempted to persuade them to defect. The line of logic that state negotiators appealed to was that the state's military force was larger than that of Bedr Khan and that his demise was inevitable. They also reminded the *beys* that the Ottoman state had British support to back them if necessary. They promised to protect the position of the *beys* who defected from Bedr Khan and give them a number of

---

<sup>164</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 50/1258, 3 Cemaziyülevvel 1263/19 April 1847, p. 3, cited in Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 283.

<sup>165</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 150-152.

political privileges. The Ottomans first persuaded Şerif Bey of Muş, the brother of the late Emin Bey, the former *mütesellim* of Muş between 1836 and 1839, and his brothers to side with the Ottomans against Bedr Khan and the rebels in Van in April.<sup>166</sup> Perhaps Şerif Bey had never been fully on the side of the rebels, but many state officials continued to doubt his loyalty despite his pledge of allegiance to the state and his participation in the battle against Bedr Khan in June.<sup>167</sup> Once state forces started to come closer to Bedr Khan's domain in late April and early May 1847, Ottoman officials managed to persuade Yezdan Sher Bey, Bedr Khan's nephew, to defect. His defection was particularly acute for Bedr Khan since he was able to inform Osman Paşa of his uncle's military strategy, allowing the former to gain an upper hand.<sup>168</sup> Later in May Han Abdal, the brother of Khan Mahmud who governed Mahmudi, and Fazıl Bey, one of main rebels in Van, defected.<sup>169</sup> Nurullah Bey in Hakkari defected in June, partly because, like other Kurdish *beys*, he believed Bedr Khan's fall was imminent, and partly because he had been involved in periodic jurisdictional disputes with him and sought greater power from him.<sup>170</sup> The *vali* of Diyarbakır, Hayrettin Paşa, also tried to turn the religious shaykhs in the Cizre region against Bedr Khan by claiming that it was their religious duty to uphold all the official decrees of the Ottoman sultan-caliph, but it is unclear whether or not the shaykhs turned away from Bedr Khan.<sup>171</sup> The *vali* of Erzurum found a crucial ally in Mahmud Efendi, a Kurdish *hoca* from Beyazıt who had

---

<sup>166</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 200-201.

<sup>167</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 171, 184.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-179.

<sup>169</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 207.

<sup>170</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 184; Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 262-263.

<sup>171</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 50/1266, 17 Cemaziyülevvel 1263/3 May 1847, p. 27.

considerable influence on the *ulema* throughout Eastern Anatolia. He accompanied the Ottoman military on its campaign in Hakkari and Van and acted as a negotiator and translator. He was captured by Khan Mahmud, but released after fifteen days.<sup>172</sup> Khan Mahmud was one of the few powerful Kurdish *beys* to remain with Bedr Khan until his surrender.

The Ottoman force of nearly twenty-five thousand encroached upon Bedr Khan's territory in late May. According to Brant, the British consul, Bedr Khan announced to the Ottomans that he would be willing to submit to their authority, but that he refused to go to Istanbul.<sup>173</sup> Osman Paşa dismissed Bedr Khan's plea as an excuse to buy himself time to remobilize his forces and reassert his authority and decided to lead his men into Cizre on June 9. However, Bedr Khan managed to flee Cizre with a number of his men and tried to regroup his forces. With the help of Khan Mahmud and Zeynel Bey, he launched an attack on the Ottomans two days later but was beaten back. His force suffered 180 losses while the Ottomans suffered only eighteen.<sup>174</sup> The Ottoman victory caused many of Bedr Khan's supporters to fear eventual defeat and either to side with the Ottomans or disperse. Some of Bedr Khan's more tenuous allies sought refuge in Iran, notably Resul Paşa, the brother of K r Muhammad Paşa, whom the Ottomans had appointed *m tesellim* of Soran after his brother died and who had offered some support to Bedr Khan. Ottoman officials maintain that Bedr Khan even corresponded with the

---

<sup>172</sup> M. Alexandre Jaba, ed., *Recueil de Notices et R cits Kourdes Servant   la Connaissance de la Langue, de la Litt rature et des Tribus du Kourdistan* [Collection of Records and Kurdish Stories Serving to the Knowledge of Language, Literature, and Tribes of Kurdistan] (St. Petersburg: Commissionnaires de l'Acad mie Imp riale des Sciences, 1860), viii-xi.

<sup>173</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyet i İdari D zenlemeler," 185.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

Iranians in an attempt to ask for asylum.<sup>175</sup> Desperate for support, he even offered to arm the Assyrians in Tiyyari and Tkhuma if they would join him in fighting the Ottomans; however, his plea was in vain.<sup>176</sup>

Despite the seeming disarray of his force, Bedr Khan remained defiant and confident that he could withstand the Ottomans by taking refuge at Orak Kale, one of his most impregnable fortresses in the mountains near Şırnak. He had boasted earlier in a letter to Ferik Ahmed Paşa that the fortress was in such a position that he doubted that the Ottomans would be unable to dislodge him:

Do what you are going to do, you can come and see. I have a strong well fortified fortress by the name of Orak that could not be successfully captured even if three kings marched upon me. I will fight you until my energy is exhausted. Even though I may not have enough strength to endure [combat], I can take refuge in my fortress.<sup>177</sup>

He took refuge in Orak Kale with five hundred of his men and his family on June 26 and was able to inflict a number of casualties upon Osman Paşa's brigade, leaving 29 killed and 115 wounded. However, he was ultimately unable to withstand the Ottomans' superior technological and organizational advantage and was forced to surrender on July 4.<sup>178</sup> Subsequently the Ottomans were able to move into the Kurdish-inhabited territories with relative ease and force the weak and leaderless *beys* to surrender to their authority. Ottoman forces managed to move into Van in mid-July and seize the Van fortress in early August, putting an end to a rebellion that had lasted for nearly three years.<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>175</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 217-219; Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 272.

<sup>176</sup> Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans*, 272.

<sup>177</sup> BBA, İ.MSM 50/1272, 28 Cemaziyülahır 1263/13 June 1847, p. 2, cited in Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 185, ft. 775.

<sup>178</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 192-195.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

After capture, Bedr Khan was eventually taken to Istanbul where the sultan bestowed rewards and honor upon him for his bravery before exiling him and his family to Crete. His kind treatment at Istanbul can be interpreted as an attempt by the state to placate his Kurdish sympathizers. Officials appeared to believe that cruel treatment of such a highly revered leader could make it more difficult for them to win the loyalty of the political heavyweights of Eastern Anatolia. Bedr Khan tried to assure the Sublime Porte that he was 'unaware' that the government was trying to implement a policy of centralization in Eastern Anatolia (a reference to the *tanzimat*), a somewhat disingenuous plea given his collusion with Khan Mahmud and the rebels at Van. But he added that he "was surprised" at the government's treatment of him given the fact that Reşid Paşa had been more harsh toward his family during his invasion of Cizre in the 1830s.<sup>180</sup>

The conflict between the Ottomans and Bedr Khan did not appear to result in a great amount of carnage and violence. The number of casualties on both sides were relatively few, many fewer than during the Ottoman campaigns against the Kurds in the 1830s and trifling compared to the number of casualties suffered during the Ottoman-Egyptian wars. A number of factors explain the seeming relative lack of violence in the conflict between the state and Bedr Khan. First Bedr Khan did not expect to gain a military victory over the Ottomans, but rather a political victory. Although Bedr Khan wanted to give the illusion that he had much more force than he actually did, both he and the Ottomans knew that he was not as strong as he claimed to be. The Kurdish *bey* of Bohtan merely held revert to the old power-sharing order in the Kurdish east.

---

<sup>180</sup> Lutfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lutfi* [Lutfi's History] (Istanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1886), 8: 506-507.

Second, the Ottomans were successful at persuading many Kurdish elites not to back Bedr Khan thus obviating the need for excessive force. Third, the Ottomans were not invested in the conflict as a means of self-preservation, as had been the case with Ibrahim Paşa of Egypt who threatened to take Istanbul, but rather as a calculated bid against a force that posed no direct threat to them. Once the state had stemmed the threat of Muhammad Ali Paşa and his son Ibrahim Paşa in Egypt in Syria in 1840 by driving them out of the region with the help of the British, they prevented them from bringing southeastern Anatolia under their control. Consequently the Ottomans felt that they could bide their time in preparing to confront the Kurdish force. The campaigns of Reşid Paşa and Hafız Paşa during the 1830s were more violent against the Kurds largely because they felt a much more pressing need to stem the tide of revolt before it became unmanageable.

Fourth, the state found it in their interest to win the hearts and minds of the local Kurds and sought to minimize inflicting harm upon them. Osman Paşa went to great lengths to avoid harming the villagers and especially their lands. He even offered compensation to villagers whose lands were ruined during the battles against Bedr Khan. He also had his soldiers attend to lands that were abandoned by fleeing locals.<sup>181</sup>

### Conclusion

The power struggle between the state and local forces as a result of the Ottoman state's continued centralization campaign was a significant factor in, if not one of the main drivers of, all major political conflicts in Eastern Anatolia during the 1830s and

---

<sup>181</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 186.

1840s. Indeed a similar power struggle between state and local groups as well as among locals themselves had been among the root causes of violent political conflict in Eastern Anatolia between 1800 and 1829. Hence the questions that are begged are why political conflict was more violent than it had been before and why it was most widespread in the region south of Lake Van, particularly Müküs, Soran, Cizre, Van, and Hakkari, and not in northeastern Anatolia.

Indeed it would be reasonable to expect that political tensions existing in northeastern Anatolia would escalate into widespread violent conflict given a number of factors. The region had been substantially destabilized as a result of the Russo-Turkish War 1828-1829. Its inhabitants were multiethnic, multireligious, and divided by class, much as they were in southeastern Anatolia. Furthermore many of the Kurdish elites in the northeast held lands as semiautonomous *yurtluk-ocaklıks* and would have been greatly resistant to attempts by the state to centralize control.

The absence of more widespread conflict in northeastern Anatolia 1830-1847 can be attributed to a number of factors. First, the Ottomans made it a priority to place a large number of troops and nonlocal administrators in Erzurum since it was vulnerable to Russian invasion. Second, the availability of more land due to the evacuation of tens of thousands of Armenians from the region created new opportunity spaces for economic control over which the Kurds and an influx of new Muslim migrants from Russia in the region competed to fill. The increased state presence combined with the increased number of rivalries jockeying for power made it difficult for any single local elite or group of elites to amass a power base that was large enough to challenge the state. Third, the exodus of Armenians had the dual effect of decreasing the tax base of local rent-

seeking groups and weakening their potential to mobilize against the state or other Muslim groups. Consequently the state and many local groups identified the Armenians as more of a benefit to their economic position (hence they encouraged many Armenians to stay in the Ottoman Empire or to return from Russia to their lands) and less of a threat to their political power. Fourth, feuds among Kurdish elites in Muş and Beyazıt continued after the conflict with Russia and the Ottoman authorities were able to play rivals against each other and thus weaken them. Due to their lack of control over their respective domains, Kurdish magnates in Muş and Beyazıt were less prone to side with Bedr Khan and tended to support the state as was the case with Şerif Bey of Muş (despite the fact that he briefly defected) and Behlül Paşa of Beyazıt.

The larger scope of conflict in southeastern Anatolia in the 1830s and 1840s can be ascribed to the following factors. First, the Ottoman state did not deem the region a major threat immediately after the Treat of Edirne in 1829 and diverted its forces from there. The state allocated its resources to expelling the Mamluks from Baghdad in 1831, stabilizing the border in northeastern Anatolia, and trying to defend Syria and central Anatolia from the campaigns of Ibrahim Paşa between 1831 and 1833. The weakened state presence opened an opportunity space for Kōr Muhammad Paşa of Soran, who had deftly fended off local rivals, to take some inspiration from Ibrahim Paşa and expand his domain. Second, the urgency perceived necessary by the Ottoman authorities to centralize control over the region, lest it fall into the hands of Ibrahim Paşa, led them to employ over-hasty and mismanaged tactics of imposing its control. Feeling an unprecedented level of threat from Kurdish groups in the southeast, the state resorted to mass violence as a quick fix to resistors. The sheer brutality of the state's campaign



against the Muslim inhabitants of southeastern Anatolia between 1836 and 1839 created a sense of shared trauma that subsequent elites, particularly Bedr Khan and Khan Mahmud, were able to seize upon in order to mobilize their forces.

Third, Bedr Khan was a deft maneuverer whose political vision was more far-reaching than that of other Kurdish elites. His aim was to achieve autonomy in a large political domain while appearing to be an ally of the state. He focused not on direct resistance to the state, but on building alliances with locals—arguably by appealing to the idea that both the Ottoman state and the political disorder that its policies towards the region was causing posed the greatest threats to the inhabitants of Eastern Anatolia—and dissolving power among local rivals. Bedr Khan also identified the Nestorians in the mountainous regions of Tiya and Diz as threats to his political ambitions, largely because of their ability to lobby British support. He pursued mass violence against the Nestorians largely because they were his most powerful rivals in the region and most unwilling to submit to his authority. He may have also felt a sense of urgency to subdue them before either the Ottoman state, or the British, used the mountain Nestorians against him.

Religion and ethnicity undoubtedly played a larger role in the conflicts of the 1830s and 1840s than they had in earlier periods. Both Kör Muhammad Paşa and Bedr Khan Bey identified religious difference as a threat, at least to the extent that religious institutions could be used as vehicles of resistance against their political wills. Both tried to convert prominent Yazidi leaders to Islam, and Bedr Khan also tried to convert his Nestorian captives to Islam. Their aim of conversion was not, however, rooted in an aversion to infidelity. Instead they sought to use Islam as a tool of manipulation to

coerce them into political submission. For if one converted to Islam, they could then be subject to Islamic law: in particular, if they tried to reconvert to Christianity they could be branded as an infidel and legitimately persecuted. Yet it should be noted at the same time that Bedr Khan was tolerant of non-Muslims in his domain so long as they submitted to his rule. Hence his main target was less the Nestorians as a whole than the Nestorians in specific regions.

Many Kurds were undoubtedly assertive of their ethnic identity and used it as a tool to rally force and challenge the state. It is significant that the Ottoman officials often referred to southeastern Anatolia as Kurdistan and even created an *eyalet* called Kurdistan after capturing Bedr Khan in the hope of winning the Kurds' loyalties. However, family and tribal identities among speakers of different Kurdish dialects often transcended their ethnic identity. Hence the appeal of Kurdishness as means of mobilization against the Ottoman state was weak and ineffective.

## CHAPTER 4

### STATE AND LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS TENSIONS, 1847-1869

The Ottoman defeat and capture of Bedr Khan in 1847 tipped the domestic balance of power in Eastern Anatolia the former's favor. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, the Ottoman state managed to increase its power to limit the capabilities of indigenous Kurdish groups to mobilize their forces, at least on a scale commensurate with that of Bedr Khan. The series of new military and administrative reforms that the Sublime Porte implemented during this period were also effective at mitigating the tensions along state-local lines that had prevailed during the first half of the nineteenth century and had often led to local rebellion against the Ottoman state. State officials managed to bring the key garrison cities of Diyarbakır, Van, and Erzurum as well as several rural areas around Lake Van (including Muş, Bitlis, Beyazıt, and Siirt) under greater central control. Although skirmishes between Kurdish tribes persisted, particularly on the border with Russia and Iran, officials managed to keep those from flaring into larger conflicts. However, this period is undoubtedly marked by the persistence of a number of social cleavages, if not the emergence of new tensions, among the local Eastern Anatolians themselves. Additionally, new rifts grew between the Ottoman state and the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia. The scale, nature, and origins of these tensions and divisions during this period continues to be a matter of debate among

scholars. One camp of scholars sees the tensions as stemming from the top-down and attribute tension and conflict between Muslims and Christians to Ottoman state rigidity in implementing changes to provide necessary security. Another camp believes the tensions to originate from the bottom-up and asserts that the ambitions of local actors were drivers of conflict, whose resolution required more resources than the Ottoman state was capable of providing. This chapter reassesses tension and conflict during this period and attempts to provide a nuanced view as to its nature and origins. Its main theme is that the tension that existed in Eastern Anatolia between 1847 and 1869 was a result of the competing visions of reform and progress among Ottoman administrators. While some administrators were committed to providing a new central order and balance of power in the Kurdish-inhabited provinces, other administrators, under the heavy influence of European advisers, promoted reform for Christians as a priority over resolving the lingering tensions that existed between state and local actors. Promised reforms took too long to fulfill, thus raising expectations of both local Christians and Muslims beyond the capability of the Ottoman state administrators to satisfy.

### Competing Visions over Eastern Anatolia

Between 1830 and 1876, both the British and the Ottomans viewed Eastern Anatolia as a crucial buffer zone that kept central Anatolia at a distance from both Russian and Iranian threats. Both agreed that the Ottoman Empire's perpetual control over Eastern Anatolia was important in maintaining the delicate balance of power between the Ottoman state and its neighbors, which if ruptured, could greatly destabilize the Ottoman Empire and leave it vulnerable to foreign invasion and domestic rebellion. Furthermore, both collaborated to "determine and establish the boundary between the

Ottoman Empire and Persia so as to prevent the conflicts and disputes which had arisen from generations of contested jurisdictions and to confirm a permanent peace in that region for the benefit of humanity and commerce.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, Britain and key Ottoman administrators differed over what method to pursue in keeping Eastern Anatolia under control of the Ottoman state.

For the British, international politics was of paramount importance when figuring out a strategy towards Eastern Anatolia. British officials, notably Stratford Canning, Henry Bulwer, and John Russell viewed Christian rebellion as one of the main threats to the integrity of the Ottoman state. They greatly feared that Russia would gain a strategic advantage in the Ottoman Empire by pushing the issue of Christian protection and representation. Although Armenians and Assyrians had not undertaken any major rebellion on the scale of the Greeks and the Serbs, the coordinating efforts that Russia had undertaken with Armenians in the Caucasus gave them reason to believe that they could instigate a rebellion among Armenians in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>2</sup> Hence, British officials pushed political reform for Christians as a priority. Britain believed that if the Ottomans made promises of equal rights to its Christian populations then this might deter Christians from seeking Russian protection and stem the spread of separatist sentiment. While the British did perceive the Kurds as a threat, they appeared more concerned over the threat that Kurds posed to Christians throughout Eastern Anatolia, and their indirect threat to destabilizing the international arena, than the threat that they posed to the

---

<sup>1</sup> FO, 78/2726, Memo on Turco-Persian Boundary Question, cited in Sabri Ateş, “Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881” (PhD diss., New York University, 2006), 193.

<sup>2</sup> Arman Dzhonovich Kirakosian, *British Diplomacy and the Armenian Question* (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute Books, 2003), 29-41.

Ottoman state.

For the Ottomans, domestic politics and balancing state and local power in Eastern Anatolia took precedence over international politics. The Sublime Porte believed that whatever threat the Christians in the region posed was less than the threat posed by the Muslim Kurds. Whatever claims of conquest over the Kurds Ottoman officials made in the aftermath of Bedr Khan Bey's capture and exile were mere posturing. Documents reveal that throughout the 1850s and 1860s, the Ottomans continued to fear Kurdish rebellion and make political concessions to them in order to appease them. The Ottoman concern over the Kurdish threat can be understood against the backdrop of its failed centralization attempts of the 1830s. Ibrahim Paşa's invasion of Syria and Cilicia 1831-1833 and Kör Muhammad Bey's revolt in Soran prompted the Ottomans to undertake hasty, if not rash, action to impose a swift central order on the Kurdish-inhabited regions between 1834 and 1839. However, the heavy-handed and violent tactics employed by Reşid Paşa and Hafız Paşa against suspected Kurdish rebels in the area south of Lake Van only ended up providing fodder for Bedr Khan's rebellion during the 1840s. After the Great Powers helped drive Muhammad Ali and his son Ibrahim Paşa out of the Levant in 1840, the Ottomans no longer felt the need for haste and favored a policy of calculated centralization over swift, aggressive centralization in Eastern Anatolia. This is evidenced by the fact that the Sublime Porte tolerated Bedr Khan's consolidation of power in the southern Lake Van region between 1843 and 1847, and did not take action against him over his massacres of Assyrian Christians in 1843 in spite of European pressure to do so.

The banishment of large Muslim Kurdish power-holding families and the

placement of the Kurdish-inhabited regions in Eastern Anatolia under the nominal authority of the *vali* of the Kurdistan *eyalet* did not spell an end to a decentralized Eastern Anatolian region. On the contrary, it seems that the state's centralization efforts ushered in an era of greater competition for power, wealth, and status among larger numbers of competing Kurdish elites. It is impossible to prove whether a strong central Kurdish-led autonomous enclave would have emerged had the Ottoman state not dissolved Bedr Khan's power. However, his rise to power by building alliances with various Kurdish groups throughout the region between 1841 and 1847 suggests that the prevailing political culture of tribalism in Kurdish society did not preclude Kurdish elites from acquiring organic power and expanding their control over territory. The Ottoman state's creation of a Kurdistan *eyalet* in 1847 is an indication that they believed the issue of foremost importance in the region was bringing the Kurds in line with state interests.

#### New Centralization: The *Eyalet* of Kurdistan

After Ottoman military officials defeated Bedr Khan and exiled him, they drew up plans to reorganize the Kurdish-inhabited regions in the Erzurum, Diyarbakır, Mosul and Van *eyalets*. Commander (Müşir) Osman Paşa along with other key administrators proposed the idea that the *sancaks* of Van, Muş, Hakkari, the *kazas* of Cizre and Mardin be merged with the *eyalet* of Diyarbakır to create the *eyalet* of Kurdistan. On 12 May 1847, Esad Muhlis Paşa, the *vali* of Mosul and former *vali* of Erzurum, was appointed the first *vali* of the Kurdistan *vilayet*, which was officially created on December 28 of the same year.<sup>3</sup> Ottoman officials reached a decision after considerable deliberation to make

---

<sup>3</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 218.

the town of Ahlat the administrative center of the *eyalet*. The rationale behind such a decision was that Erzurum, Mosul, and Diyarbakır were too distant from the Kurdish-inhabited regions to provide effective administration. Furthermore, Ahlat was relatively close to the border where administrators could more effectively monitor political activity in Iran.<sup>4</sup> During the deliberations, state officials repeatedly revealed their disdain for the Kurds and their intention to rule them with an “iron fist.”<sup>5</sup>

The Ottomans announced the creation of the Kurdistan *eyalet* to Kurdish inhabitants throughout Eastern Anatolia before the Ottomans actually achieved central control over the regions that the *eyalet* was to encompass. The announcement can be best understood as a tactical maneuver devised by Ottoman officials both to intimidate elites from attempting to continue resistance and to appease them with an agreement. State officials championed the capture of Bedr Khan as Sultan Abdülmecid’s “conquest of Kurdistan” and rushed to inform the remaining elites of how swiftly they could put down local resistance attempts.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, by giving the *eyalet* the name of Kurdistan, the Ottomans appeared to be respecting latent Kurdish ethnic claims to the region. Although the Ottomans as well as local Kurds had long referred to the Kurdish-inhabitant regions as Kurdistan, this was the first time that the term was used to refer to an *eyalet*.

The four most prominent elites who remained in power after the capture of Bedr

---

<sup>4</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde*, 255; Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, 60-61. It should be noted that Özoğlu believes the deliberations about the Kurdistan *eyalet* to have occurred in 1846. I was unable to verify the document that he cited. However, this seems unlikely given the fact that Bedr Khan still remained a significant impediment to the Ottomans at that time.

<sup>5</sup> Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, 61; Badem notes how officials referred to Kurds as “*badnihad* (ill-natured),” see Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War, 1853-1856* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 363.

<sup>6</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde*, 253-255.



Khan were Nurullah Bey of Hakkari, Abdal Bey of Müküs (the brother of Han Mahmud who had sided against Bedr Khan early on), Şerif Bey of Muş, and Yezdan Sher Bey, the nephew of Bedr Khan, all of whom had sided with the Ottomans against Bedr Khan.<sup>7</sup>

The Ottomans were fully intent on either toppling these elites or phasing out their power soon after exiling Bedr Khan. Yet they wanted to make sure that the *beys* could secure little recourse from the Iranians, other local Kurdish tribes, or from each other before leading a charge against them. Nurullah Bey was the most vocal against the Ottomans. In mid-1848, he declared independence from the *eyalet* of Kurdistan after he acquired support from Muhammad Shah of Iran, one of whose wives was a sister to one of Nurullah Bey's wives.<sup>8</sup> However, the Qajar Shah's death in September of the same year deprived the Kurdish *bey* of Iranian security and allowed the Ottomans to undertake a front against him in the spring of 1849, when they ousted him and replaced him with Ferik Izzet Paşa.<sup>9</sup> Since Müküs was in a less strategic position than Hakkari, Abdal Bey was in a more difficult position than Nurullah Bey. Just as Bedr Khan believed that the power of Assyrian Christians in Tiyyari, Aşita, and Tkhuma would be his weak point in centralizing control over the region south of Lake Van, Abdal Bey of Müküs, he believed that the local Armenian magnates made him vulnerable. He also saw in the Christians opportunities to enrich himself to be able to provide supplies and material incentives for

---

<sup>7</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 226.

<sup>8</sup> Naftula A. Khalfin, *Borba za Kurdistan: Kurdskiy Vopros v Mezhdunarodnykh Otnosheniakh XIX Vyeka* [The War for Kurdistan: The Kurdish Question in International Relations During the Nineteenth Century] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Vostochny Literatury, 1963), 65; BBA, İ.MSM 52/1343-5, 11 Şaban 1264.13 July 1848, Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 226.

<sup>9</sup> Tuncay Öğün, *Doğu'nun Mirlerine Son Veda: Cizreli İzzeddin Şîr Bey ve İsyanı* (Istanbul: Yeditepe, 2010), 64.

his militia.<sup>10</sup> Şerif Bey of Muş was also suspicious of Armenians around him and sought to occupy their lands by sending his recruits to stake their position on them.<sup>11</sup>

It was not long after announcing its creation that state officials mandated the application of the *tanzimat* reforms in the Kurdistan *eyalet*. Virtually all of the *yurtluk-ocaklık* land-holding arrangements that had traditionally allowed Kurdish *beys* quasi-autonomy from state control were terminated in the *eyalet*. Furthermore, power-holding Kurdish *beys* were restricted from serving as the *kaymakams* of the individual *kazas*.<sup>12</sup> Additionally the Ottomans attempted to increase their revenue by dispatching a state appointee to gather data on the demographics of the population, assess its wealth, and collect taxes from the region. Between 1847 and 1853, revenue from much of Eastern Anatolia appears to have increased,<sup>13</sup> partly because taxes formerly paid to Bedr Khan and other Kurdish elites removed by the Ottomans in 1847 were now paid directly to the state. Yet, the increase can also be attributed to the fact that Ottoman officials, in a bid to fund their expensive reform project, often placed locals under increased pressure to pay taxes that they had not been used to paying, for instance the *iane-i umumiye* (public assistance tax), which officials began to impose on locals 1852. Given ongoing local resistance to the implementation of the *tanzimat* and increasing international tension, state officials appear to have reduced taxes on Eastern Anatolia just before the outbreak of the Crimean War.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Gencer, “Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler,” 228-230.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>12</sup> BOA, İ.MSM. 52/1346-1, 9 Şevval 1264/8 September 1848, cited in Gencer, “Merkezileşme Politikaları,” 86.

<sup>13</sup> Gencer, “Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler,” 222-223.

<sup>14</sup> Ali Akyıldız, *Osmanlı Finans Sisteminde Dönüm Noktası: Kağıt Parası ve Sosyoekonomik Etkileri* [The Turning Point in Ottoman Finance: Paper Money and its

The methods of tax collection as well as the moral character of the tax collectors varied from region to region. İzzet Paşa, whom the Ottomans appointed as the *kaymakam* of Hakkari after ousting Nurullah Bey in 1849, was repeatedly accused of trying to enrich himself.<sup>15</sup> However, Ismail Kamil Paşa, appointed in his stead, travelled throughout the villages of the Hakkari region in order to convince *ağas* and *shaykhs* that some taxes were merely temporary. He also promised monetary gifts and political rewards for compliance.<sup>16</sup> The *kaymakam* of Van, Mehmet Reşit Paşa, was reported to be a just administrator and collected taxes fairly.<sup>17</sup>

After the last large local Kurdish potentate Nurullah Bey was overcome, the Ottomans managed to bring Diyarbakır, Hakkari, and Dersim under the more complete control of the *eyalet*.<sup>18</sup> The administrative districts of Mardin and Cizre were united into a single district and placed under the authority of Mustafa Paşa, the former *kaymakam* of Van. The *eyalet*'s administrative center was Ahlat from 1847 until Mehmed Esad Paşa's death in 1851.<sup>19</sup> Yet since Ahlat's inhabitants were somewhat callous with regard to the state officials which made it difficult to implement a strong administrative apparatus, the Ottomans subsequently decided to make Diyarbakır the administrative capital of Kurdistan from 1851 to 1867, when its name was changed back to the Diyarbakır

---

Socioeconomic Effects] (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1996), 54; Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 292.

<sup>15</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 258.

<sup>16</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 364.

<sup>17</sup> Gencer, "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler," 258.

<sup>18</sup> BOA, A.MKT. 103/64, 27 Zilkade 1263/6 December 1847 cited in Fatih Gencer, "Merkezileşme Politikaları Sürecinde Yurtluk-Ocaklık Sisteminin Değişimi" [Alteration of the Yurtluk-Ocaklık System in the Process of Centralization Policies], *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 49 (2011): 86.

<sup>19</sup> BBA, İ.DH 228/13683, 7 Rebiyülahır 1267/9 February 1851.

*eyaleti*.<sup>20</sup> State yearbooks (*salname*) between 1847 and 1867 show that the Ottoman state managed to root itself more strongly in the administrative affairs of the region than it had previously.<sup>21</sup> The *beys* appear to have been sapped of the strength that they had traditionally derived from the state's backing.

### Ottoman-Christian Relations 1847-1853

It was in the interests of the sultan to show signs of benevolence towards the Christian populations in Eastern Anatolia during the 1840s and 1850s. Since the Christians were proactive in business, they were helpful for the local economy and provided a valuable tax base. Furthermore, the sultan was well aware of the Christian groups' abilities to attract attention to their plight from the West. He faced a great deal of criticism from many British officials for not protecting the Nestorian Christians in Tiyyari from Bedr Khan. In 1847, the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire demanded a larger investigation into the causes of the treatment of the Nestorian Christians, Jacobite Christians, and Yezidis.<sup>22</sup> The sultan wanted to comply with the ambassador's demands for justice since he realized that his empire had become largely reliant on the British for backing against the Russians.

A number of operations suggest that the Ottomans were indeed committed to ameliorating the situation of Christians in the east. In 1849 the *vali* of Kurdistan Mehmed Esad Paşa had a number of Jacobites, Nestorians, and Yezidis released from

---

<sup>20</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 257-258.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 60-61.

<sup>22</sup> Report from the *kaymmakam* of Diyarbakır, BBA, MVL 119/2961, 17 Rebiyülevvel 1264/22 February 1848, document 43, cited in Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 258.

captivity and returned to their lands of origin.<sup>23</sup> However, he kept those who had converted to Islam in their original places of conversion so as to not arouse the anger of the locals who believed that a convert's turn from Islam back to their original faith was an offense worthy of death.<sup>24</sup> The Ottomans invited the Nestorian patriarch, the Mar Shimun, who had been in refuge at Urmiye, Iran to come back into the Ottoman Empire through Başkale, a town near the Iranian border that was within a day's walking distance of Hakkari, which he accepted. Field Marshal Mehmed Reşid Paşa of the Army of Anatolia Division additionally requested that the state give the Mar Shimun a stipend.<sup>25</sup> Another significant instance of the Ottoman state's attempt to reconstruct Christian society from the damage that it had suffered as a result of Bedr Khan's rule was the *vali's* order in 1855 to recover the wealth and possessions that Bedr Khan Bey had stolen from the Christian churches during the mid-1840s and return them to the Christian community.<sup>26</sup>

The removal of Nurullah Bey from the region by the forces of Ottoman commander Ismail Kamil Paşa, the recognition of the Nestorians as a separate *millet* from the Armenian Gregorian *millet* in 1846, and their efforts to restore order in the Nestorian-inhabited region were all greeted with enthusiasm by the Assyrian Christian leaders. A letter from the Mar Shimun in 1850 shows that he and other Assyrians were content with the state of protection that the Assyrians in the Hakkari region enjoyed as a result of the Ottomans' seemingly successful centralization attempts. The Armenians equally praised

---

<sup>23</sup> BBA, A.MKT 226/96, 10 Zilkade 1265/28 September 1849.

<sup>24</sup> BBA, A.MKT 222/87, 19 Şevval 1265/8 September 1849.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Field Marshall Mehmed Reşid Paşa, BBA, İ.MVL 148/4190, 18 Recep 1265/10 June 1849, cited in Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 276.

<sup>26</sup> BBA, HR.MKT 100/11, 29 Rebiyülahır 1271/19 January 1855.

the Ottomans for their efforts to rein in Kurdish excesses.<sup>27</sup>

Yet despite the fact that the Ottomans had managed to extricate rebel power-holding families and increase their presence in even the most rugged of areas in Eastern Anatolia, the state continued to face a legitimacy crisis among the Kurds for two primary reasons. First the state's attempts to settle the seminomadic tribes limited the economic viability of their pastoral livelihoods. Many tribes ignored the *valis'* injunctions to settle and continued their lives of seasonal transhumance. Yet because of the state's increased presence in the region and their stricter enforcement of policies, they were forced to develop more creative ways of pastoralism. Second, the state increased the tax burden on Kurdish groups. This led the most powerful of the Kurds to extort higher sums of payment from their client peasantry, both Christian and Muslim.

It was not long after the Ottomans expelled the powerful Kurdish *beys* that a state of anarchy in the region appeared to prevail, whose victims were the powerless peasantry. Locals began charging the Nestorian Christians in the Hakkari the *cizye* tax, from which the Ottoman state had exempted them. Some of the Nestorian chiefs in the Tiyari region requested that the Ottoman state grant concessions (*imtiyaz*) to the Mar Shimun.<sup>28</sup> However, their refusal to pay it provoked the rent-seeking Küban tribe to undertake a series of violent raids against them.<sup>29</sup> Although the Ottoman authorities were able to put them down, raids on Christian properties were becoming a recurrent problem. The reasons for what appeared to be increasing raids is partly rooted in the growing power-

---

<sup>27</sup> BBA, A.DVN 59/61, 29 Cemaziyülahır 1266/12 May 1850.

<sup>28</sup> BBA, MVL 242/53, 21 Zilkade 1267/17 October 1851.

<sup>29</sup> BBA, A.MKT.MVL 48/78, 28 Sefer 1268/22 December 1851; BBA, A.MKT.MVL 51/42, 22 Cemaziyülevvel 1268/14 March 1852.

struggle between Kurdish groups. Part of their military strategy against each other was to undermine each other's economic base, which usually consisted of Christian, as well as Muslim, peasantry from whom they collected taxes.

Another intriguing phenomenon occurring throughout Eastern Anatolia during the early 1850s was the suspicion with which Kurds began to treat Armenians. This was particularly the case in adjacent regions of Muş and Sasun, where high numbers of Armenian villages were located with little government security. For instance, on one occasion in 1846, Kurdish leader Hacı Keleş invaded Sasun and killed two Armenian priests and seven Armenian laypersons. A priest named Khachadur from the Sasun region made an appeal to the Ottoman government to have the alleged killer tried in a court of law.<sup>30</sup> On another occasion in 1850, the *vali* of Kurdistan reported that members of the Kurdish Almanlu tribe in the village of Kasür (near Muş), headed by a person by the name of Şaro, would beat Armenians “without reason,” and in consequence, he had the tribal chief exiled.<sup>31</sup>

Additionally the Armenians complained of seemingly increased Kurdish raids. The Armenian ecclesiastic leaders appeared to have become increasingly involved in lobbying support from the Ottoman state and foreign powers on behalf of Armenian peasants throughout Eastern Anatolia. A letter from Bishop Gabriel of the Aghtamar monastery on an island in Lake Van to Catholicos Nerses Ashtaraketsi in Echmiadzin on May 16, 1852 made a strong plea for the deliverance of the Armenians from the yoke of

---

<sup>30</sup> Migidich Dikranian, *Hayeli Gortsots yev Ashkhatutyants* [Looking Glass of Cases and Works] (Istanbul: Tparani Tivitchean Tadeosi, 1864), 33-34.

<sup>31</sup> Kurdistan *vali* Mehmed Esad Paşa to Grand Vizier Koca Mustafa Reşid Paşa, BBA, A.MKT.UM 5 Recep 1266/17 May 1850.

the “ruffian and barbaric” Kurdish tribes who were abundant around Lake Van. According to the letter, linguistic differences between Kurds and Armenians made communication, let alone negotiation, a difficult if not impossible process for the Armenian peasants, leaving them at the mercies of the more powerful Kurdish groups. Since they had frequently become the targets of Kurdish raiders who sought a relatively quick and easy source of booty and to damage the source of income for rival Kurdish tribes, a palpable fear had overtaken many of the Armenian Christians. Bishop Gabriel bade Ashtaraketsi make his utmost efforts to politically intervene and help free the “plebeian” (*ramik*) Armenians from their bleak social state.<sup>32</sup> Although Catholicos Ashtaraketsi had a reputation of being politically active, and had a “great tendency for independent action” in spite of Russian *Polozhenie* (state regulations passed in 1836 that limited the political powers of the Armenian ecclesiastics),<sup>33</sup> his hands were too tied by Russian policy for him to take overt political action in Ottoman territory.

The Kurds appeared to be aware of the growing political prowess of Christian clergymen in the region and tended to avoid extorting or attacking Armenian peasants who were located within a short distance from an influential clergyman. A report from the *vali* of Kurdistan states that Kurdish marauders primarily targeted the most vulnerable peasants who were the least likely to have swift recourse through a clergyman or European official. He states in a report in 1852 that some groups of Armenian peasants in the Van *sancak* who lived without a representative priest or church requested aid in

---

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Bishop Gabriel of Aghtamar to Hakob Krjikian, Simeon, ed., *Divan Hayots Patmutyun*, 13: 15-16.

<sup>33</sup> Counselor Danskii described Nerses Ashtaraketsi as such, George Bournoutian, *Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia*, 404.



moving to a location with a church; however, they were blocked by local Kurdish groups.<sup>34</sup>

The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853 hampered the Ottoman state's efforts towards improving relations with non-Muslims in the east. The war stalled efforts to restructure the administration of Eastern Anatolia and provide the needed political order in the wake of the exile of the major *beys*. Many Kurdish groups took advantage of the disorder to prey on the Muslim and non-Muslim peasantry. Furthermore, the Russians sought to turn the Ottoman Christians against the sultan and the British increased pressure on the state to institute further reforms.

#### The Crimean War 1853-1856

Tensions had been mounting for several months between the Sublime Porte and Russia prior to the outbreak of war, which originated largely in the escalation of a dispute between Russia and France over the Holy Places in Jerusalem. Russia's claim as the guardian of the Holy Places stemmed from her victory in the 1768-1774 Russo-Ottoman War, as a result of which she forced the Ottomans to sign the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, which granted the Russians some representative privileges on behalf of Orthodox Christians in the Empire.<sup>35</sup>

France began to challenge Russia's position after Napoleon III won the election of

---

<sup>34</sup> BBA, MVL 253/20, 15 Zilkade 1268/29 September 1852; BBA, A.MKT.UM 116/3, 20 Safer 1269/2 December 1852.

<sup>35</sup> The degree to which the Ottoman Empire conceded representation privileges to the Russians is a matter of great debate, a summary of which can be found in Roderic Davison, "Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility: The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji Reconsidered," *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 29-50.

1848 and established the Second Republic. In order to win the public vote and bring about unity in tumultuous French politics, Napoleon III appealed to the radical Catholics, who asserted France's increased role as protector of the Christians. Since the radical Catholics' claims coincided with Napoleon III's desire to assert greater control over the Mediterranean, he pressured the sultan, through his ambassador Charles La Valette, to grant France guardianship rights. Although the sultan was initially inclined to honor the earlier treaties with Russia, he reversed his position in late 1852 upon the news that the French had dispatched a gunboat towards the region and after the British *chargé d'affaires* convinced him that the French possessed naval power that was superior to that of the Russians. In response to the Ottomans' concession to the French, Czar Nicholas I ordered the mobilization of 128,000 troops and began to draw up plans to invade and capture much of the Balkans and Istanbul.<sup>36</sup> Fearing the response of Britain and France and his potential inability to overcome them, the Czar hedged his bets with regard to a full-scale invasion of the Ottoman Empire. However, when he sent Russian troops into Moldavia, then recognized as an autonomous principality under Ottoman suzerainty, in July 1853, the British and French sent warships to the region. Confident that the Ottoman Empire would have the full backing of the British and French, Sultan Abdülmecit I declared war on the Russians on October 4, 1853 beginning with campaigns into the Danube region and the southern Caucasus.<sup>37</sup>

Three reasons explain the Sublime Porte's decision to launch a campaign on its

---

<sup>36</sup> Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 103-105; Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 150-155.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Robarts, "The Crimean War," *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston; Bruce Alan Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 161-163.

eastern front. First, even though Russia's focus during the early 1850s was the Danube region, northeastern Anatolia and the Caucasus had proven to be vulnerable to Russian invasions during the 1806-1812 and 1828-1829 wars. Second, the profitable Trabzon-Tabriz trade route experienced significant growth throughout the 1840s, which benefitted both the Ottoman economy and the sultan's relationship with the British. Russian occupation of Erzurum and Beyazıt could potentially rupture the trade route.<sup>38</sup> Third, Ottomans believed the sizeable Muslim population of the Caucasus to be natural allies who could potential help the Ottomans secure territory as far as the Caspian Sea. The Sublime Porte repeatedly attempted to make contact with Shaykh Shamil in Daghestan, hoping that he would help push the Russians out of the region.<sup>39</sup>

The British were ambivalent towards the idea of an Ottoman offensive in the Caucasus. On the one hand, they feared an Ottoman campaign would offset the delicate balance of power among rival Kurdish elites and the Ottoman state. Internecine conflict could break out in the region thus destabilizing politics and even harming agricultural yields. On the other hand, the British believed that if they bolstered an Ottoman invasion of Georgia that they could potentially drive the Russians, who would "find few friends among the natives," out of the region.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Charles Issawi, "The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade, 1830-1900: Rise and Decline of a Route," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 1970): 21.

<sup>39</sup> See Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* (Portland: F. Cass, 1994), 415.

<sup>40</sup> This ambivalent reaction to an Ottoman Eastern invasion is expressed by the British Consul in Erzurum in a letter to the British ambassador of Istanbul dated June 25, 1853: "The militia has been called out, and altogether the forces to be collected here will, it is said, amount to about 40,000 disciplined troops. I hope that with such an imposing force the Porte and the General may not be tempted to make an attack on Georgia, as from the want of skill in the Turkish officers, there would not be much hope of success. But if Russia were to meet with reverses in Europe, so as to disable her from succouring

As during the Russo-Ottoman war 1828-1829, the Muslims on the border region were divided in their loyalties. Muslims and Armenians around Yerevan, on the Russian side, appeared willing to side with the Czar upon the outbreak of the Crimean War in October 1853. Armenian and Muslim groups alike supplied the Russian forces with militias to help fight against the Ottomans' Caucasian offensive. Muslim attitudes towards Russia in the Kars region were arguably more divided than those in Russian territory. Yet after the Russians won crucial victories at the battles of Akhaltsikhe and Başgedikler, on November 26 and December 1, respectively, an increasing number of Muslims appeared to come out in support of the Czar.<sup>41</sup> Kurdish irregulars (*başibozuks*) proved their lack of commitment to the Ottomans especially at the Battle of Başgedikler, where they reportedly fled the battlefield upon the first bursts of Russian gunfire.<sup>42</sup> The Kurdish irregular soldiers' reluctance to fight for an Ottoman victory is understood given the fact that the state-appointed *paşas* in command were reportedly given little food and inadequate resources to withstand harsh winter conditions. Charles Duncan, a British captain serving in the Erzurum and Kars region during the Crimean War, accuses Ottoman officers of "robbing the military chests at a time when the troops were actually starving."<sup>43</sup>

---

Georgia, and if an [*sic*] European force were landed in that country to cooperate with the Turkish force, then indeed a forward movement combined with an attack on the part of the Caucasian tribes would not fail to drive the Russians out of Georgia, for they would find few friends among the natives, were they to experience a reverse." See Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 265.

<sup>41</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 90-91; For a description of the battle of Başgedikler, see Prince Bebutov, 19 November, *Akty Sobranniye Kavkaskoy Arxeologicheskoy Komissiey*, 10: 772-774.

<sup>42</sup> Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 364-365.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Duncan, *Campaign with the Turks* (London: Smith, Elder, 1855), 1: 111.

After the Ottomans' embarrassing defeat at Başgedikler, about a dozen Kurdish chiefs traveled to the Russian military base at Gyumri and announced their defection from the Ottoman to the Russian side. Mikhail Loris-Melikov, an Armenian in the service of the Russian military, was put in charge of managing relations with Kurdish groups and organizing them within the Russian military. His most noteworthy converts to the Russian side were Ahmet Ağa of the Zılanli tribe and Kasım Khan, who had previously held the rank of *kapıcıbaşı* in the Ottoman army, and was given equivalent rank and compensation by the Russians.<sup>44</sup>

In late July, Selim Paşa attempted to storm Yerevan, but was fended off by General Wrangel, who pursued Selim Paşa and his men into Ottoman territory. Although Selim escaped to Van, Wrangel managed to capture Beyazıt. With the Russians having positioned some twenty thousand soldiers at Kürükdere in preparation for an advancement on the Ottomans' key garrison of Kars, the Ottomans began to panic and undertook an ill-prepared and ultimately unsuccessful attack on the outpost. Commander Bebutov, an ethnic Armenian, defeated some thirty thousand Ottoman soldiers with a force of eighteen thousand, including five hundred Kurdish cavalry, and four to five thousand Kurdish infantry. The battle resulted in high casualties on both sides. The Ottomans lost between five and eight thousand, and the Russians three thousand. Furthermore, nearly ten thousand irregulars, mostly Kurds, fled back to their lands during the battle. The Ottomans stripped a number of *paşas* of their appointments as a result of their defeat, including Mustafa Zarif Paşa, and had them replaced with different officers.

---

<sup>44</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 91-93; Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 366.

Lucky for the Ottomans, the revolt of Shaykh Shamil in Chechnya and Daghestan led Russian strategists to withdraw from Beyazıt and hold their position on the Caucasian front.<sup>45</sup>

In the aftermath of the Ottoman defeat at Kürükdere, increasing numbers of Kurds from the Hayderanlı and Celali tribal confederacies on the borderlands announced their defection to the Russian side. Russian officials were willing to accept the Kurds, but were suspicious of their depth of their commitment to Russia's aims in the region. A Russian report indicates fickleness on the part of many Kurdish leaders. In the report it is claimed that Ali Ağa, a Hayderanlı chief, wrote to Russian officials after their victory at Kürükdere saying that "[he] and all of the Hayderanlı are ready to submit to the Russians and act as one with them." However, the reports claim that it was later revealed that Ali Ağa intended to return his loyalties to the Ottomans in the event that the lands captured by the Russians were returned to the Ottomans. Ali Ağa was also attempting flight to Iran, which was neutral during the war.<sup>46</sup> The attitude of Ali Ağa was not uncommon among other Kurds, indicating that many Kurds believed that the Ottomans had an upper hand against the Russians with British and French support.

The battle of Kürükdere exposed the disorganization and corruption of the officers in command and led to a greater crisis of confidence within the Ottoman army. With decreasing faith in their own officers, the Ottomans looked increasingly to

---

<sup>45</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 93; György Klapka, *The War in the East: From the Year 1853 Till July 1855* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1855), 46-48; Henry Atwell Lake, *Narrative of the Defence of Kars, Historical and Military* (London: R. Bentley, 1857), 10-11; William Edward David Allen and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border, 1828-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 77-80.

<sup>46</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 101-102.

European military advisers as a source of guidance. Foreign advisers had accompanied the Ottoman military on campaigns since the beginning of the war. But with Britain frustrated over the Ottoman forces' seeming inability to drive the Russians out of garrison border towns in the Caucasus, additional British advisers arrived in Eastern Anatolia to oversee military efforts. The Ottomans were deeply torn over the role of the Europeans in devising war strategies. On the one hand, there was a general agreement that the advisers were a necessity, since Britain and France were crucial allies against Russia. On the other hand, Ottoman military officials feared the reaction of conservative religious elements among the locals, who tended to see the foreign officers as interlopers. They did not want to appear as if completely under the orders of foreign advisers. An attitude of European military tactics as "innovation" is made apparent in the memoirs of Ottoman Commander Zarif Mehmet Paşa.<sup>47</sup>

In summer 1855, the Russian forces under General Muravyev prepared to penetrate the Ottomans' eastern border once again. Unlike the war of 1828-1829 where the Russians could take a number of easy battles, the Ottoman forces were better armed during the Crimean War and were fairly good marksmen, even if their officer corps was lacking in organizational skills and disease had weakened their ranks. Muravyev worked through Armenian informants from Kars, who kept him abreast of the Ottoman military position in the garrison. When he launched his assault on Kars in 1855, his assessment was remarkably accurate.<sup>48</sup>

Colonel Atwell Lake remarked of his general suspicion of Ottoman officers,

---

<sup>47</sup> Zarif Paşa'nın Hatıratı, 492, 497, cited in James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse, 1839-1878* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2000), 281.

<sup>48</sup> Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, 84.

whom he blamed for their defeat at Kars:

The Turkish soldier...is a brave, loyal, long-suffering, hardy fellow, and if well led, is inferior to no soldier in the world. The national decay occasioned by the venality, the rapacity, and intrigue combined with the indolence and sensualism of the higher orders of Turkish officials, has scarcely yet reached the over-worked, ill-paid, and maltreated commonalty, who are often preserved by their very poverty and sufferings from the crimes, vices, and abominations which degrade their social superiors.<sup>49</sup>

Two letters from the Assyrian Patriarch in the environs of Van indicated that a “general Kurdish rebellion could take place if we went there.” He added, “do not rely on the Kurds for anything, for they do not go far from their homes and are only capable of robbing their neighbors. Those who are of our Kurds are only trustworthy from time to time.”<sup>50</sup>

The Yerevan regiment attempted correspondence with Bedr Khan’s nephew Yezdan Sher, who had launched a rebellion against the Ottomans. The leader of the regiment sent a letter encouraging Yezdan Sher and whatever other Kurdish allies he could find to rebel against the Ottoman state. However, the letter was intercepted by Ottoman officials and did not reach the Kurdish *bey*.<sup>51</sup>

Consul Brant reported to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe on August 3, 1855 that after the Russians seized KöprükÖy, Veli Paşa retreated to Erzurum, leaving the area between Erzurum and KöprükÖy without security forces. The French Consul reported from his visit to Pasin, located approximately ten miles west of KöprükÖy, that “all the villages [in

---

<sup>49</sup> Henry Atwell Lake, William Fenwick Williams, Christopher Charles Teesdale, and H.L. Thompson, *Kars and Our Captivity in Russia: With Letters from Sir W.F. Williams, Major Teesdale, and the Late Captain Thompson* (London: R. Bentley, 1856), 7.

<sup>50</sup> General Muravyev to Prince Dolgorukov, June 10, 1855, *Akty Sobranniye Kavkaskoy Arxeologicheskoy Komissiey*, 11: 349.

<sup>51</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 109.



the region] were abandoned, the cattle left at the mercy of the Koords, who were driving them off, and then burning the houses.” He further lamented the loss of property and the food shortages that would likely ensue from failure to cultivate and harvest the land.<sup>52</sup> After capturing Kars, commander Muravyev planned an advancement on Erzurum, where, according to his intelligence, there were only fifteen thousand poorly equipped and untrained Ottoman soldiers. He estimated capturing the city by June 1856; however, the Allied invasion of Crimean offset his plans.<sup>53</sup>

After the declaration of war, some fanatical Muslims attacked Christians and foreigners who were subjects of the Sublime Porte. In response, Grand Vizier Mustafa Naili Pasha sent an order to the governors to prevent such treatment of the Christians. He wrote that the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire were heart and soul together with Muslims in the current war against Russia. It was very unbecoming to look with suspicion and hostility at such loyal subjects who had been showing their loyalty and righteousness. The perpetrators of such acts of violence against them were “fanatics and feather-brains, who cannot distinguish between good and evil and who cannot tell friends from enemies.”<sup>54</sup>

The Ottomans appeared in some instances to restore order in Eastern Anatolia and repair the damage that was caused by the *başıbozüks*. For instance on one occasion they located a group of ten Armenian children abducted by *başıbozuk* chief Topal Hacı Süleyman Ağa in Mardin, who had been brought from Erzurum and Beyazıt to

---

<sup>52</sup> Lake, *Narrative of the Defence of Kars*, 111-112.

<sup>53</sup> Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, 101.

<sup>54</sup> BBA, A.MKT.UM 149/7, 7 Rebiyülevvel 1270/8 December 1853, cited in Badem, 359.

Diyarbakır and then Mardin. They had the children brought back to their parents.<sup>55</sup>

### The Revolt of Yezdan Sher

In spite of the additional support that French and British provided to Ottoman forces, several groups in regions that were not close to the zones of international warfare exploited the weakness of the Ottomans during the war. During the Crimean War, rebellions broke out on the Ottoman western frontier in Epirus, Crete, and Thessaly,<sup>56</sup> its southeastern frontier in Cizre, and its southern frontier, in the Hijaz. The reasons for the revolts were not interrelated. The revolt in Epirus was an attempt on the part of Greek rebels to expand the independent Greek state that had been created in the Morea in 1830. The revolt by *sharifs* and *ulema* against the Ottomans in 1855 was provoked by the Ottomans' continuing measures against the slave trade in the Red Sea.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the revolt of Yezdan Sher in Cizre in 1854 was rooted in his deep displeasure with Ottoman state policy in the Kurdish inhabited areas in the aftermath of the capture and exile of Bedr Khan Bey in 1847.

The revolt of Yezdan Sher Bey exemplifies the ongoing crisis of legitimacy that the Ottoman state was facing among the Kurds in southeastern Anatolia. Yezdan Sher had been instrumental in leading the Ottoman state to capture his uncle Bedr Khan Bey in 1847. The motive for his betrayal of Bedr Khan is unclear. It could have been over a

---

<sup>55</sup> BBA, HR.MKT 171/91, 2 Cemaziyülevvel 1273/30 December 1856.

<sup>56</sup> For a summary of the revolt, see Stephanos I. Papadopoulos, *Oi Epanastaseis tou 1854 kai 1878 sten Makdonia* [The Revolutions of 1854 and 1878 in Macedonia] (Thessaloniki: Makedonike Laike Bibliotheke, 1970), 21-30.

<sup>57</sup> Ulrike Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the Homeland* (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2003), 200; Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 80.

combination of factors including a falling-out between him and his uncle, the feeling of vulnerability because of encroaching state forces, or perhaps even out of the hope of gaining power himself, even at the expense of his uncle's capture. Whatever his motive, the state rewarded him by appointing him the *mütesellim* of Cizre and a salary of 3,500 *kuruş* after Bedr Khan's capture and exile in 1847.

However, it was not long after that the state relegated Yezdan Sher and placed him under the more direct authority of an Ottoman *kaymakam*, Mustafa Paşa. To keep him content they kept paying him a salary and giving him secondary jobs. This handling of Yezdan Sher was probably the result of Grand Vizier Koca Mustafa Reşid Paşa's advice to Sultan Abdülmecid that the Ottoman state should not completely disaffect Yezdan Sher, but allow him seeming positions of influence while quietly displacing his real authority.<sup>58</sup> The Ottomans tried to keep him out of Cizre. In 1849, they appointed him to unimportant administrative positions first in Istanbul and then Mosul. It is likely that Yezdan Sher perceived this as the state's dismissal of his importance and led him to seek an opportunity to challenge their renewed assertion of authority.

With the advent of the Crimean War, the Ottomans became more reliant on Yezdan Sher to provide them with much needed manpower from a still unruly Eastern Anatolia. While he was at Mosul in early 1854, Yezdan Sher was appointed by the state as a military official and was charged to gather a force of nine hundred soldiers from the Cizre and Bohtan regions. However, Yezdan Sher, bitter towards the Ottoman authorities for trying to curb his power by appointing outside administrators over him, saw this as an opportunity to amass power and begin the initial stages of what would gradually become

---

<sup>58</sup> BBA, A.AMD 13/79, 29 Zilhicce 1265/1848-1849.

a revolt. When he reached Cizre, he wrote to the *kaymakams* of Siirt and Mardin informing them that he was some 200,000 *kuruş* short of the money needed to recruit soldiers and that he would remain in Cizre until they sent him the money. He also began making increasing demands upon the Ottoman Empire without directly threatening revolt, although it was strongly implied. He demanded that the Ottomans keep him in charge of the political and economic affairs of Cizre and Bohtan and allow his family, which was at Mosul, to come back to Cizre. He also demanded that the Ottoman state appoint Said Bey, who appeared to be one of his loyalists, to the office of *müdür* over Şirvan, a town located within a day's walking distance east of Cizre. Finally, he demanded that the Ottoman state remove their troops from Garzan and Midyat and release all of his men that they had taken captive in those regions. He still maintained that if these conditions were met that he would remain loyal to state command and gather soldiers to fight against Russia.<sup>59</sup>

When it became apparent that the Ottoman state would not grant him his requests, he declared an open revolt in November 1854, which came as an unwelcome surprise to many British and Ottoman officials. The state-appointed *kaymakam* of Mardin, Osman Paşa, remarked in dismay in a letter to higher ranking Ottoman authorities that “Cizre and Bohtan are slipping from our hands!”<sup>60</sup> British army physician Humphrey Sandwith, who was serving as inspector general of the hospitals in northeastern Anatolia at the time of the Crimean War, remarked that “when intelligence arrived of the revolt of...Ezdinsheer Bey [*sic*], or his having already taken possession of Jezireh, and

---

<sup>59</sup> Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 368-369.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from Osman Paşa, the *kaymakam* of Mardin, BBA, İ.MMS 3/117, 23 Safer 1271/14 November 1854, cited in Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 289.

hundreds of wild mountaineers flocking to his standard, we all stood aghast.”<sup>61</sup> By mid-December, Hilmi Paşa, the *mutasarrıf* of Mosul, noted that he believed the rebels to number some fifteen to twenty thousand.<sup>62</sup> He noted that the rebellion made it difficult to collect taxes and fight the Russians, and that the matter was too pressing to wait until spring to resolve.<sup>63</sup>

Even though the Ottomans had been increasing their administrative and military presence in southeastern Anatolia, they had been struggling to quell a wave of banditry that had been going on since the early 1850s.<sup>64</sup> The lack of a legitimate central leader whom the Kurdish groups revered and feared made the Ottomans’ task of maintaining social order all the more difficult. Yezdan Sher’s revolt was met positively by local Kurdish groups throughout southeastern Anatolia. He managed to bring Cizre, Bohtan, Siirt, Garzan, and Şirvan under his control with relative ease by December 1854.<sup>65</sup>

The Russians were privy to Yezdan Sher’s disaffection and encouraged his perseverance against the Ottoman state and bade him ally with them. In late August 1854, the Russian commander of the Yerevan *oblast* wrote an appeal to Yezdan Sher for his help against the Ottomans in the war. In the letter he wrote that “the Russians had

---

<sup>61</sup> Humphry Sandwith, *A Narrative of the Siege of Kars and of the Six Months’ Resistance* (London: J. Murray, 1856), 212.

<sup>62</sup> *Mutasarrıf* of Mosul, Hilmi Paşa to the Grand Vizier, BBA, İ.MMS 4/135, 1 Rebiyülahır 1271/22 December 1854.

<sup>63</sup> Note from the *mutasarrıf* of Mosul, Hilmi Paşa, BBA, İ.MMS 4/135, 21 Rebiyülahır 1271/11 January 1854.

<sup>64</sup> See for instance BBA, A.MKT.NZD 78/77, 7 Şaban 1269/16 May 1853 which reports on the state’s attempts to stem the rampant banditry by “desert people” throughout the villages in the Cizre and Mardin regions. Also see BBA, MVL 270/21, 20 Cemaziyülevvel 1270/19 February 1854 which reports on the social disorder at Midyat and Cizre.

<sup>65</sup> Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 287.

long extended a hand of concert towards the Kurds.” He added:

Why do you delay in accepting our offer? For what purpose are you gathering forces? Do you not think that the protection from the Ottoman Empire will be little when it is destroyed? You are a knowledgeable man. You have many Kurdish tribes who respect and revere you. Give permission to your cavalry and order them to go about *your* business, [and not the Ottoman state’s]. I promise you that I will protect and strengthen your rights and governance. You will see that we are true friends and honorable allies.<sup>66</sup>

Letters from Russian General Likhutin confirm that Yezdan Sher was anxious to accept the Russians’ bid for an alliance and sought to move his forces northwards with the hope of meeting them at Bitlis. By January 1855 he managed to take control of Müküs as well as Bitlis, penetrating further into Kurdish-inhabited territory than had his uncle Bedr Khan.<sup>67</sup>

The British consul in Diyarbakır described the situation in February 1855:

Ezdeen shir Bey has lately attacked the district of Mediat which he has plundered and almost totally ruined. The Government troops, consisting solely of Bashi Bozuks, under a certain Abdullah Bey made little or no resistance, a portion returned to Mardin, and Abdullah Bey with the rest retired to his native village Sour between Mediat and Mardin, plundering all the villages on his way. He then tendered his resignation of his command which was accepted by Osman Pasha, Caimakam of Mardin without any kind of enquiry into his conduct...Troops, sent from Baghdad to Mosul to the amount of about three thousand regulars and four thousand bashi bozuks, are now said to be on their march towards Jezireh. His movement has caused Ezdeen shir Bey to withdraw from Mediat towards that place and has prevented a threatened attack on Mardin.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> BBA, İ.MVL 353/15435, doc. 49, 30 Zilkade 1270/24 August 1854, cited in Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 287; Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 2: 24. Emphasis added.

<sup>67</sup> Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 369; Mikhail Dorimedontovich Likhutin, *Russkie v Aziatskoi Turtsii v 1854 i 1855 Godakh* [Russians in Asian Turkey 1854-1855] (St. Petersburg, 1863), 257.

<sup>68</sup> Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 369.

Yezdan Sher was said to have dealt his immediate opponents a cruel and direct blow, without much thought for the morality of his actions. He crushed many Yezidi rebels whom he mistrusted. He captured many of their children and distributed them among his followers as slaves.<sup>69</sup> He is said to have been equally as harsh with Kurdish dissenters. Nonetheless, Yezdan Sher appeared to welcome loyalists regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation. According to Russian reports, many Greeks, Assyrians, Arabs, Kurds from other families and tribes, and even Yezidis joined his ranks.<sup>70</sup>

Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of the Crimean War and the revolt of Yezdan Sher was that the Nestorian Patriarch, the Mar Shimun, agreed to an alliance with the Kurdish *bey*. It is likely that Yezdan Sher pushed for the alliance due to the fact that he regarded the Ottoman state to be a greater threat, and did not want a war with the Nestorians to be a distraction. The Mar Shimun appeared to be an opportunist during the war, appealing to whatever force would be most advantageous to his situation. Throughout the war he made appeals to the both the Russians and the British, promising them his backing in return for their support. After the Ottomans had captured Yezdan Sher, he claimed that the latter's men persecuted the Assyrians, perhaps in a bid to appear as a helpless victim and make good with the Ottomans. After the Crimean War, the sultan did not seek any punitive action against the Mar Shimun, in spite of his attempts to ally with the Ottomans' enemies, and allowed him to remain in Julamerk.<sup>71</sup> A note from

---

<sup>69</sup> Sandwith, *A Narrative of the Siege of Kars*, 214.

<sup>70</sup> Mikhail Dorimedontovich Likhutin, *Ruskie v Aziatskoi Turtsii v 1854 i 1855 Godax* [Russians in Asian Turkey in the Years 1854 and 1855], 256.

<sup>71</sup> Murat Gökhan Dalyan, "19. Yüzyıl'da Nasturiler (İdari Sosyal Yapı ve Siyasi İlişkileri) [Nestorians in the Nineteenth Century (Administrative Social Structure and Political Relations)] (PhD diss., Süleyman Demirel University, İsparta, 2009), 112-113.

Dwight W. Marsh, who traveled throughout Eastern Anatolia during the Crimean War, confirms that the Mar Shimun had several Kurdish allies in the region:

Mar Shimon, the Nestorian Patriarch, yesterday was welcomed to the valley with the roar of guns, martial music and the presence of a large and enthusiastic gathering. The Koords, Resh Agha and Chellabi Agha, with their armed men from Gawar, had arranged themselves on the mountain slope, and just as Mar Shimon emerged from the ravine they gave him a grand salute, which was responded to by the Jeloo troops accompanying the patriarch.<sup>72</sup>

According to Russian reports, Yezdan Sher managed to amass a force of sixty to one hundred thousand loyalists.<sup>73</sup> Although this is likely an exaggerated claim, it is noteworthy that the *kaymakam* of Mardin, Osman Paşa, believed Yezdan Sher's force to have outnumbered that of his uncle Bedr Khan Bey during the mid 1840s.<sup>74</sup>

To deter him the Ottomans tried to enlist the support of the religious elites in the region. In order to keep Yezdan Sher from taking Siirt, Kenan Paşa, the *kaymakam* of Siirt, sent Shaykh Ibrahim Efendi, Mufti Mustafa Efendi, and others to dissuade the Kurdish *bey* from pushing onward with his revolt. Yet Yezdan Sher remained steadfast in his resolve to restore his former political glory. He even threatened to pursue Kenan Paşa and his family if he did not relent in his attempts to prevent him from seizing control over the region.<sup>75</sup>

Hilmi Paşa, the *mutasarrıf* of Mosul, coordinated a plan to counter the revolt that gained the support of the *valis* of Baghdad and Kurdistan and Major General (*mirliva*)

---

<sup>72</sup> Dwight W. Marsh, *The Tennessean in Persia and Koordistan* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1869), 205.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>74</sup> Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 370.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from the *vali* of Kurdistan Vezir Hamdi Paşa to Grand Vizier Koca Mustafa Reşid Paşa, BBA, İ.MVL 353/15435, 11 Rebiyülevvel 1271/2 December 1854, cited in Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler*, 292-293.



Mehmet Paşa. The plan was to bring five thousand soldiers, including *başıbozuk* (irregular cavalry), from the north and the south in order to surround Yezdan Sher and keep him from spreading the revolt in any direction.<sup>76</sup> Ottoman forces succeeded in securing the alliances of a number of key figures living in the vicinity of Cizre and managed to dealing a game-changing blow to Yezdan Sher's forces at the small town of Dirun in late February, located just outside Cizre; however, Yezdan Sher managed to escape.<sup>77</sup>

The British and French grew increasingly concerned about the revolt of Yezdan Sher, especially since the allocation of Ottoman soldiers to put down the revolt could have blunted the force against the Russians on the eastern flank. General William Fenwick Williams, the British commissioner with the Ottoman army in Anatolia during the Crimean War who commanded the Ottoman army during the defense at Kars in 1855, had met Yezdan Sher in 1849 when he was in the region as a British representative at the border negotiations between Iran and the Ottoman Empire. At the time he believed Yezdan Sher to have been an “oppressed man” and unjustly treated by the Ottoman Empire. He even offered him refuge at the British consulate at Mosul.

Upon the staging of the rebellion in Cizre and Siirt, General Williams thought the incident to be a skirmish between the irregular *başıbozuk* soldiers at Siirt and Ottoman commanders. However, with time it became clear to him that it was indeed Yezdan Sher who was responsible for the uprising. He wrote to Lord Stratford Canning telling him to urge the Sublime Porte to not dispatch soldiers from the Kars and Erzurum regions to put

---

<sup>76</sup> BBA, İ.MMS 4/135, 3 Cemaziyülevvel 1271/22 January 1855.

<sup>77</sup> BBA, İ.DH 317/20474, Kastamonu *vali* Mehmet Hamdi Paşa, 8 Cemaziyülahır 1271/26 February 1855.

down the revolt, but instead soldiers from Istanbul. Although the Ottomans agreed to this, it was not long after that Şükrü Paşa, the officer in command at Toprakkale, on the northern frontier with Russia, dispatched infantry, cavalry, and artillery from Toprakkale towards southeastern Anatolia.<sup>78</sup> Irrate at the Ottomans' seeming noncompliance, British officials acted on their own accord to try to persuade Yezdan Sher to stand down.

General Williams sent Mahmud Efendi, a Polish convert to Islam who was an officer in the Ottoman military, to meet with Yezdan Sher and tell him that the protection of his life would be ensured by the British if he would end the revolt. Yezdan Sher, fearing that his movement was waning due to losses incurred by the Ottoman state and that he would eventually be met with even more violent pushback from Ottoman authorities after the conclusion of the war with the Russians, agreed and went to Mosul. He and a number of his followers were later exiled to the Balkans.

Many British observers paint Yezdan Sher's surrender as a victory for British politics and skill at negotiation. Indeed the British played a key role in dissuading Yezdan Sher from continuing the revolt, but this ignores the Ottomans' political and military efforts to curb the revolt prior to British intervention.

After Yezdan Bey's capture, Kurds at Siirt, who were formerly loyal to Yezdan Sher, pled with the Ottoman officials to spare them and allow them to continue to live on their lands. Kurds in the Garzan region also quickly submitted to the Ottoman state.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 370-377.

<sup>79</sup> Petition from the *kaymakam* of Siirt, Yusuf Kenan Paşa, BBA, İ.DH 317/20474, 13 Cemaziyülahır 1271/3 March 1855.

### Diverse Kurdish Loyalties

During the Crimean War, as was the case during the Russo-Ottoman War 1828-1829, many Kurdish groups proved to be fickle allies of the Ottomans. The Russians made a strong bid to rally their allegiance. The Russian commander of Yerevan wrote to the Kurds in Van bidding them not take up arms against the Russians on the pretext that the Russians do not “conduct war against peaceful inhabitants.” He told them to submit to the Russians and they would enjoy the same benefits of peace and continued prosperity that a number of other Kurds who complied with the Russians’ orders had received.<sup>80</sup> He also sent similar missives to Shaykh Abed of the Haydaranlı tribe, a number of *shaykhs* and *beys* in Kurdistan, including Derviş Bey and Shaykh Abdal, Kurdish elites in Diyadin, and Musa Ağa of the Celali tribal confederation, with similar requests.<sup>81</sup>

The Russians’ approach to attracting the Kurds witnessed a marked change from before. During the 1828-1829 conflict the Russians had often tried to woo Kurdish loyalties through bribes and gifts. While the Kurdish tribal elites were more than often willing to accept these offers from the Russians, their loyalties always remained in question. In many cases they would not deliver on their promises and their loyalties were largely contingent upon their somewhat last-minute perception of which side had an advantage. During the Crimean War, the Russians were more loath to draw the Kurds to their side through bribery. Colonel Likhutin thought the giving of money and gifts to the Kurds to be a waste of money and effort. Instead he believed the threat of reprisal was a more effective tactic at ensuring the long-term compliance of the Kurds.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 2: 25.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 26-28.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 102.

Members of the Celali tribal confederation, who resided near Karabulakh and Beyazıt, were the first to announce their submission to the Russians.<sup>83</sup> Their proximity to Russia explains their promptness in pledging allegiance to the Czar. Other Kurds near the border were also more inclined towards making an alliance with the Russians. The motivation behind their loyalty was often not so much out of some organic devotion to their political cause, but out of fear of being targeted by the much stronger and more organized Russian government if they did not comply. Yezdan Sher's seeming eagerness to pronounce his loyalty to the Russians was more the result of political short-sightedness. He was under the belief that he could somehow achieve autonomy over southeastern Anatolia more easily under the Russians than under the Ottomans, when in fact it is highly unlikely that the Russians would have allowed him such had they managed to extend their control as far as Cizre.

In a report from General Wrangel to Prince Bebutov in July, 1854, Wrangel reports that before the Russian army managed to take Beyazıt on July 19, 1854, many Kurdish irregulars appeared to be fleeing the battlefield once Russian victory became increasingly apparent. Two thousand Ottoman soldiers were killed in the battle and 450 were wounded. Many Kurdish irregulars fled south to Van. Others hid in the mountains. Armenian groups from the Yerevan region played an instrumental role in the battle.<sup>84</sup>

Not all Kurds near the Russian-Ottoman border tended towards the Russians. Behlül Paşa, *mutasarrıf* of the strategic border town of Beyazıt, was committed in his devotion to the Ottoman state. The Ottomans had allowed him exceptional privileges that

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 1: 101.

<sup>84</sup> Letter from General Wrangel to Prince Bebutov, 30 July 1854, *Akty*, report 764, 811-814.

they had not given to other Kurdish *beys*. During the initial *tanzimat* reforms and the consequent centralization campaigns of the 1830s and 1840s, Behlül's hold on the Beyazıt region was left virtually untouched. He was one of the few Kurdish elites to maintain his land entitlement of *yurtluk-ocaklık*. When the Ottomans began to limit his salary since during the early 1850s, he made repeated requests for an increase in his pay. Once the Crimean War began, the Ottomans appeared to have complied.<sup>85</sup> Behlül Paşa remained loyal to the Ottomans for the entirety of the war, and they gave him special posthumous commendation for his service against the Russians in 1856.<sup>86</sup>

#### Dissolution of Power Among the Kurds After the Crimean War

After the Ottomans managed to capture and exile Yezdan Sher Bey in 1855, they appear to have successfully dissolved enough power among Kurdish groups to prevent any local elites from staging a major uprising, or at least not large enough to garner widespread international attention. However, it cannot be said that the Ottomans managed to fully centralize control. One of the greatest indications that the state was unable to implement effective control over Eastern Anatolia was the difficulty that they faced in effectuating land reform in the region.

In 1858, the Ottoman Land Law decreed that all lands in the Empire be surveyed by state appointees and that landholders be registered in the *tapu* office. The aim of the decree was to identify all actual landholders, facilitate land administration, and more easily resolve land disputes. In many cases lands that were previously recognized as

---

<sup>85</sup> BBA, MVL 570/86, 01 Zilkade 1274/13 June 1858.

<sup>86</sup> BBA, A.MKT.MHM 102/97, 5 Rebiyülahır 1273/4 December 1856.

*yurtluk-ocaklıks* were repossessed by the state and auctioned off to local bidders. It was hoped that by redistributing these lands, the state would be able to impose a more regular system of revenue collection and would empower a greater number of local groups to counter elites' attempts to amass power against the state.

In reality, the process of surveying and registering lands was ineffective at achieving the desired result of economic and political regularity. Baer notes that the Ottoman administration implemented reforms on an *ad hoc* basis and gave poor instructions to locals as to their responsibilities and the new procedures.<sup>87</sup> The new land code did not often take into consideration the ways in which the locals lived and did not provide them with attractive and profitable alternatives. For instance while the land code recognized many of the mobile possessions of seminomadic groups, such as tents and livestock, as private property, it did not recognize agricultural lands, across which the seminomadic groups moved back and forth to provide pasture for their flocks, as their quasiprivate property since they were not there long enough to claim it as their own. This only added to the stress upon seminomadic groups whom the state had long been pressuring to settle in permanent locations. The state made orders without consideration of how tribal groups were able to carry on their socioeconomic livelihoods in an effective way. In consequence, many of the more powerful groups reverted to fee collection from less powerful agricultural groups, both Muslim and non-Muslim, in order to cover their

---

<sup>87</sup> See Gabriel Baer's analysis of land redistribution in Egypt, "The Evolution of Private Landownership in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent," in *The Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914*, ed. Charles Issawi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 87.

financial needs.<sup>88</sup>

Article 18 of the *Tapu* Law stipulated that lands that exceeded “five hundred *dönüms*” held by a single landholder be auctioned off by the Ministry of Finance. Local authorities were to auction off lands to the highest bidder who could purchase the land on lease for a year but then extend it to ten years.<sup>89</sup> Yet in spite of the stipulation, bidders appeared to remain on paper only, and many exploited the system. The British Consul at Aleppo noted that many locals who entered state service as “members of the municipal council and court of justice” often obtained *miri*<sup>90</sup> lands either for themselves or for other local elites to whom they were beholden at a low price.<sup>91</sup> For instance, when the Ottomans attempted to implement a *tapu* land registry in Hakkari in 1858,<sup>92</sup> the person they appointed to the registry was the brother of a local *mufti* with whom he collaborated to restore the lands of Hakkari under more central control of local leadership.<sup>93</sup> The Ottomans eventually ended up reverting back to granting the Kurdish leader Nurullah Bey a *yurtluk-ocaklık* over the land, since the *tapu* registry seemed unfeasible there.<sup>94</sup>

The Ottomans also attempted to redistribute land holdings in Palu, another area which had been recognized as a *hükümet* under the control of Kurdish *beys* for centuries and a *yurtluk-ocaklık* for much of the nineteenth century. The Ottomans attempted to seize all of the land in their possession and auction it off to villagers who desired to

---

<sup>88</sup> Doreen Warriner, *Land and Poverty in the Middle East* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1948), 16-18.

<sup>89</sup> 1858 *Tapu Law* cited in R.C. Tute, *The Ottoman Land Laws: With a Commentary on the Ottoman Land Code of 7<sup>th</sup> Ramadan 1274* (Jerusalem: Greek Conv. Press, 1927), 131.

<sup>90</sup> *Miri* lands are state owned lands.

<sup>91</sup> *Accounts and Papers*, session 2, vol. 30 (1859), 809.

<sup>92</sup> BBA, A.MKT.MHM 131/81, 17 Şevval 1274/31 May 1858.

<sup>93</sup> BBA, MVL 614/36, 23 Muharrem 1279/20 July 1862.

<sup>94</sup> BBA, A.MKT.NZD 380/81, 23 Cemaziyülevvel 1278/27 November 1861.

purchase it. However, two *beys* of Palu, who were members of the *tapu* council, managed to play the Ottomans' ambitions to their own advantage. They forced the villagers to recognize them as the chief landowners and did not recognize the Ottomans' demands that they hold two-thirds of the lands for auction. The *beys* also demanded a number of fees from the villagers including the *öşür* tax and *icare-yi zemin* (rent tax). When the villagers complained to the Ottomans of the situation, state officials undertook an investigation. However, the result of the investigation was that the accused *beys* were granted *tapus* to the lands.<sup>95</sup> A similar situation occurred in the village of Hazro, near Diyarbakır, in 1863 where local elites obtained offices in the land registry and exploited the Ottomans' trust by not carrying out real redistribution of lands.<sup>96</sup> In both cases, the Ottomans seemed to have scrapped their attempts to implement land reform, or at least put them off for a later time, and reestablish the *yurtluk-ocaklık*.

The venality of state officials in charge of Eastern Anatolia was another issue that hindered the implementation of both justice and central control. In 1862, Consul Taylor compiled a list of "monies taken as bribes" by Hacı Kamil Paşa, the *vali* of the Kurdish *eyalet*, from local Kurdish elites in Eastern Anatolia "in return for appointments or services in their favor." The highest bribe on the list is 110,000 piasters from the *meclis* and *kaymakam* of Mardin to have the *vali* of Kurdistan at Diyarbakır dismiss complaints that were lodged against them by locals and in order to "obtain [his] favor and support." The highest individual briber on the list was Şir Bey of Şirvan who gave the *vali* of

---

<sup>95</sup> Oya Gözel, "The Implementation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 in Eastern Anatolia" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, 2007), 58.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.



Kurdistān 80,000 piasters to be “made the *mudir* of Shirvan and a *medjlis* member of Saert.” Fettah Bey of Garzan bribed the *vali* 60,000 piasters to have his brother made the *müdiir* of Garzan and to obtain permission to leave Diyarbakır, where he was being held by state authorities to answer complaints against him. Süleyman Bey of Çapakçur (modern-day Bingöl) paid the *vali* 75,000 piasters to have authorities dismiss complaints from locals against him. Another significant bribe was 70,000 piasters from Ahmed Ismail Efendi of Diyarbakır to be made a member of the *meclis* in the city, which gave him significant decision-making power in local political and economic affairs. Other bribes came from elites in Siirt, Cizre, Silvan, Lice, and a few other towns mainly throughout southeastern Anatolia, in the region that had been controlled by Bedr Khan fifteen years prior, and in the mountains nearby Diyarbakır to the northeast. Other Kurdish-inhabited areas such as Muş, Hakkari, Van, and Beyazıt, appeared to be more calm. The reasons for the bribes were for political appointments and dismissals of charges against various individuals.<sup>97</sup>

It is intriguing that the Ottomans had summoned many of these *beys* to appear before a court to answer to charges of oppression and corruption against them in 1861. Most notably Şir Bey of Şirvan and Abdülfettah Bey of Garzan were called to Diyarbakır and had their political positions occupied by another Ottoman appointee.<sup>98</sup> Yet having offered bribes they were reinstated into their political positions and their unjust and abusive rule went unchecked even amidst myriad complaints. Even a *takrir* submitted to the Ottoman *meclis* by the Armenian patriarch of Istanbul in 1864, which concerned only

---

<sup>97</sup> BBA, HR.TO 238/22, 31 December 1862, cited in Gözel, “The Implementation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 in Eastern Anatolia,” 175-176.

<sup>98</sup> BBA, A.MKT.MVL 128/34, 22 Zilkade 1277/19 May 1861.

the oppressions of Fettah Bey of Garzan, was virtually ignored by authorities.<sup>99</sup>

When the *vali* of Kurdistan allowed Şir Bey to return as the *müdür* of Şirvan, many of his local opponents were infuriated. Frustration was such that it appeared to transcend religious divisions. An Armenian monk (*rahip*) by the name of Guzar “slandered” Şir Bey and collaborated with two other Kurdish warlords, Mahmud Bey and Nehruz Bey, to try to “provoke the local populace” against him. Yet their efforts were to little avail. Şir Bey managed to have the Armenian monk exiled to Vidin in the Balkans. He also had Mahmud and Nehruz expelled from the region.<sup>100</sup>

The Ottomans finally had the repressive *beys* of Şirvan and Garzan prosecuted in 1867 after they dissolved the Kurdistan *eyalet* and had it placed under the jurisdictional authority of the *valis* of Mosul, Diyarbakır, Van, and Erzurum.<sup>101</sup> From then onwards, the state appeared to have been somewhat more committed to the establishment of justice in the region, even if it was slow and often ineffective. It is notable that during the 1870s the Ottomans took wider strides towards the implementation of public order and managed to fend off more successfully the excesses of seminomadic tribes.<sup>102</sup> Yet the Ottomans appeared only to be treating the symptoms of the dissolution of power in Eastern Anatolia, and were faced with challenges on several fronts which kept them from being able to make sweeping changes in the region that would have remedied its causes. The outbreaks of violence against Christians during the Russo-Turkish War 1877-1878 are a

---

<sup>99</sup> BBA, MVL 689/15, 28 Cemaziyülahır 1281/26 November 1864.

<sup>100</sup> BBA, A.MKT.MVL 142/82, 12 Ramazan 1278/14 March 1862.

<sup>101</sup> BBA, MVL 733/77, 5 Zilkade 1283/10 April 1867.

<sup>102</sup> BBA, Y.PRK.DH 1/1, 17 Rebiyülevvel 1289/25 May 1872. In this particular instance the Ottoman army in Siirt is dispatched to prevent the Usturikan tribe of Şirvan from raiding and pillaging nearby villages.

testament to the Ottomans' loose security implementations.

### The Assyrians and Conflict

In some ways, the Assyrian Christians were arguably in a better position than many of the Armenians throughout Eastern Anatolia after the Crimean War. The threat of mass violence against the Assyrian Nestorians in the Hakkari region was greatly reduced with the removal of Bedr Khan Bey of Cizre and Nurullah Bey of Hakkari from power in 1847 and 1849, respectively, since they were in a stronger geographic position and had a stronger military tradition than the Assyrian and Armenian Christians. Hence, a much greater degree of military force and coordination was needed among marauding Kurdish tribes to be able to subdue these Nestorian Christians.

Another political advantage that both Catholic and Nestorian Assyrians had which the Armenians did not enjoy to the same degree was more immediate representation from the clergyman whose lived more closely to the Assyrian lay persons and had a strong connection with the French consul in Mosul, who lobbied on behalf of the Catholic Chaldeans in the region, and the British government, who lobbied on behalf of the Nestorian Christians. Since the massacres of Nestorians in the mid-forties, in reaction to which the Mar Shimun fled to Mosul and later Urmiye in Azerbaijan, the British Foreign Office referred to the Nestorians as a religious community in "whose welfare they feel much interest."<sup>103</sup> In order to not be outbid by the French, the British government urged the Ottomans to make accommodations for the return of the Mar Shimun to Qodchanis, near Hakkari, so that the Assyrians felt less prone to turn to Catholicism as a means of

---

<sup>103</sup> Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, 109.

gaining the protection of the French.<sup>104</sup> The Ottomans obliged and gradually gave the Mar Shimun increasing privilege and status in the empire. By contrast, the lot of the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia was made much more difficult due to the fact that the individuals who were supposed to represent them to the sultan and stand up for their welfare were primarily elite Armenians living in western Anatolia, whose financial interests were generally too tied up in the political integrity of the Ottoman state for them to concern themselves too greatly with the Armenians of Eastern Anatolia.

In 1843, the Ottomans, at the behest of foreign powers, created separate Chaldean and Nestorian *millets* who technically were no longer under the authority of the Armenian *millet* leaders in Istanbul.<sup>105</sup> Theoretically, this gave them the power to enter into direct negotiation with the sultan. However, it is likely that both the Armenians and the Ottoman state authorities continued to intervene in their affairs well into the 1860s. Ubicini writes that in 1864 it was proposed to the Ottomans that the Nestorians be separated from the jurisdiction of the Gregorian Armenian Patriarch and be able to have their own patriarch, or *milletbaşı*, who headed the *millet*, but the authorities took no

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 108-109.

<sup>105</sup> An official note from the Erzurum *vali* Kamil Efendi in December 1843 makes note of two separate and distinct “Nestorian and Chaldean *millets*,” BBA, İ.MSM 48/1229, 11 Zilkade 1259/4 December 1843. John Joseph, who bases his research solely on Western documents, believes that only a separate Chaldean *millet* was created for Catholic Assyrians in 1844. See Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, 59. It may be that the Armenians continued to intervene in the affairs of the Assyrians after the creation of the *millets* without Ottoman censure, leading Western observers to believe that the Ottomans had fully granted them jurisdictional status. However, Ottoman documents since late 1843 refer separately to a *Nasturi millet* (Nestorian *millet*) and *Keldani millet* (Chaldean *millet*), suggesting that a separate Nestorian *millet* headed by the Mar Shimun was recognized.

action.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, because of British and French backing, the Nestorian and Chaldean Assyrian communities were allowed to continue their succession arrangements. The heads of their *millets* were not appointed or subject to removal by the sultan, but were determined by their longstanding religious leadership-selection traditions.

Jacobite Christians in the areas of Tur Abdin and Mardin did not enjoy separate protections, largely because they lay outside the radius of interest of both the French and the British. Yet many of them appeared content to adhere to the Armenian *millet*, which had become more stridently active on behalf of Armenian Christians in Eastern Anatolia during the late 1860s and early 1870s, as a means of legal protection against the abuses committed by Muslim tribes and even by the state authorities. When the Ottoman state proposed creating a separate *millet* for them in 1873 headed by the Jacobite patriarch Bedros, “the majority of his coreligionists disavowed him, refusing to break their link that bound them to the Armenians, with whom they had a common cause, despite their doctrinal differences.”<sup>107</sup>

Despite their slightly advantageous position to that of the Armenians, the Assyrian Christians still dealt with a number of conflicts both among themselves, and with fragmented Kurdish tribes. Catholic Assyrians sought to stake their claim on the Assyrians around Diyarbakır, Mosul, and Cizre. In 1858, the state authorities were petitioned to intervene to prevent the Chaldean Assyrians in Cizre, who formed a majority of the Assyrian Christian population there, from pressuring the Protestants,

---

<sup>106</sup> Jean Henri Abdolonyme Ubicini and Abel Pavet de Courteille, *État Présent de l'Empire Ottoman* [The Present State of the Ottoman Empire] (Paris: J. Dumaine, 1876), 204.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

Jacobites, and Nestorians from converting to Catholicism. Koca Musa, a local Kurdish elite, also persecuted those Christians who would not accept Catholicism because they could seek legal exemption from paying taxes to the Chaldean leader, from which the Kurdish elite could then enrich himself.<sup>108</sup>

The rivalries between the mountain Nestorians in Tkhuma and Tişari continued to occur periodically over rights to use summer pastures for their flocks. On one occasion in 1859, a dispute between Nestorian Christians grew to the extent of almost fatal violence. The *kaymakam* of Hakkari, Kenan Paşa wrote a letter to Major General (*mirliva*) Abdurrahman Paşa suggesting to him that the intensity of the rivalry could be best mitigated “not by sending reinforcements,” but “an arbitration officer” (*arabulucu bir memur*).<sup>109</sup> However, the military leaders did not oblige and instead sent troops to quell the conflict. The success of the intervention is debatable since renewed conflict broke out a year later.<sup>110</sup>

The Assyrians, particularly those who lived on the plains away from ecclesiastical representation, were also frequently exposed to the raids of unruly Kurdish tribes. A group of Nestorian Assyrians sent a petition directly to Queen Victoria to urge the Ottomans to provide greater protection against the threatening and exploitative treatment of Kurdish groups. Earl Russell told his ambassador to the Ottoman Empire to ask the sultan to take steps “at once to relieve [the Nestorians] from the oppression to which they are subjected.”<sup>111</sup> The Ottomans appear to have obliged the requests of the British and

---

<sup>108</sup> BBA, HR.MKT 241/44, 2 Zilkade 1274/14 June 1858.

<sup>109</sup> Kenan Paşa, *kaymakam* of Hakkari, to Major General Abdurrahman Paşa, BBA, A.MKT.UM 367/9, 22 Safer 1276/20 September 1859.

<sup>110</sup> BBA, A.MKT.UM 166/92, 3 Rebiyülevvel 1276/1 October 1859.

<sup>111</sup> Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, 109.

sought to present evidence of compliance. Kenan Paşa wrote the British consul at Mosul in 1861 that the soldiers under his command were dispatched to “prevent incidents from arising between the Nestorians and the Kurds.”<sup>112</sup> The Ottomans also sought to endear the Nestorian leaders to the state to keep them from submitting complaints to the British. In 1860 they awarded the Mar Shimun with special state commendation.<sup>113</sup> In 1861 the state granted the Nestorian chief of Hakkari, Reis Revil Efendi, the honor of the *mecidiye nişanı*, a prestigious award often given to courageous military commanders.<sup>114</sup> In the face of continuing tax and fee collection abuses perpetrated by Kurdish groups in charge of tax collection over the Nestorians during the early 1860s, the sultan put the Mar Shimun in charge of tax collection for the Nestorian community in 1865.<sup>115</sup> The salary that the Mar Shimun received from the Ottoman state continually increased throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, especially during the 1890s. In 1892, his yearly salary was increased from 1,500 piasters to 2,500 piasters.<sup>116</sup>

The Ottomans showed themselves to be a somewhat effective protector of the Assyrians and managed through its increased military presence in southeastern Anatolia during the late 1860s and 1870s to establish some semblance of political order in the region. While such protections were arguably tenuous, they were sufficient to prevent significant outbreaks of violence comparable to those which had marred the Assyrian

---

<sup>112</sup> BBA, HR.MKT 362/67, 26 Cemaziyülahır 1277/9 January 1861.

<sup>113</sup> BBA, A.MKT.UM 415/3, 1276/1859-1860.

<sup>114</sup> BBA, A.MKT.UM 522/90, 2 Cemaziyülahır 1278/5 December 1861.

<sup>115</sup> BBA, HR.TO 201/38, cited in Murat Gökhan Dalyan, “19. Yüzılda Nasturiler,” 29, 65.

<sup>116</sup> KP Matveev, *Asurlar, Modern Çağda Asur Ulusal Sorunu* [The Assyrians: The Assyrian National Question in the Modern Period], trans. Murat Kaya from Russian (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996), 23.

inhabitants during the 1840s. Furthermore, the Assyrians appear to have been spared violence during the 1877-8 Russo-Turkish War.

It should be noted that the Ottoman government also appeared to protect the Assyrian converts to Protestantism more effectively than the Armenian converts. Much like the Armenian Gregorian clergymen, the Mar Shimun was indeed preoccupied with the seemingly rapid conversion rates of Assyrians to Protestantism. Missionaries report that Assyrians in Gevar accused the Mar Shimun of corruption. When Mar Shimun visited the region and “tried in vain” to persuade and even compel Protestant converts to turn to the Nestorian faith tradition, Ottoman authorities made it clear to the Mar Shimun that “he could not persecute.” The missionaries added, “the Government has acted in fairness thus far, and has made no objection whatever to the preliminary steps for a Protestant community.”<sup>117</sup> The Assyrian converts, reports Mr. Shedd, were under a great deal more persecution in Urmiye than those in the mountainous areas where the Assyrians tribes were more prevalent. He attributed this to their more tolerant attitude, although much can be said for the fact that the tribes were afflicted much more with a collective memory of the brute violence that they experienced in the 1840s and perhaps felt more indebted to the British for protection.

---

<sup>117</sup> Letter from Mr. Shedd, Mountain District (West of Urmiya), 17 November 1865, *Missionary Herald* 62 (1866), 78-79.



Postwar Transformations in the Eastern  
Anatolian Armenian Community

The end of the Crimean War spelled a new phase of political activity and tensions in the Ottoman Armenian community. One of the main catalysts for these tensions was the Ottomans' renewed effort towards political reform, which was largely sponsored by the British. British negotiators, primarily Stratford Canning, drew up a new plan of action that they demanded that the sultan implement before the Allied Powers met with Russia in Paris for postwar talks. Britain's hope was that the new plan, which promised equality between Muslims and Christians, would deprive the Russians of a pretext for diplomatic intervention on behalf of the Ottoman Empire's Christian subjects and would attract an increasing number of Christians to maintain loyalty to the Ottoman state and not side with separatist movements.<sup>118</sup> Feeling a sense of indebtedness to Britain for her role in the war, the sultan made the essentially British-designed plan an imperial decree, called the *Hatt-ı Hümayûn* or Imperial Reform Edict, on February 18, 1856.

Both Muslim and non-Muslim elements of Ottoman society were divided over the new decree. Many of the more conservative Muslim elements of the Empire decried the *Hatt-ı Hümayûn* as near heresy and a dangerous break from traditional Ottoman patterns of governance, which they believed were established on an Islamic foundation. They pointed to the fact that the *Hatt-ı Hümayûn* of 1856 made no mention of the Qur'an or Islam as had the *Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif* of 1839. Furthermore, they were angered by the decree's abolition of the *cizye* tax on non-Muslims and its stipulation that Christians serve in the military. On the other hand, more politically liberal Ottoman elites

---

<sup>118</sup> Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 413.

welcomed the decree as an important step towards the implementation of a modern form of government. Some Ottoman officials tried to play both sides of the issue. For instance, to other Ottoman officials, Reşid Paşa criticized the new decree, arguing that “Muslim opinion [would] object to [it].” However, to European officials he strongly praised the decree, claiming that its political stipulations were not enough.<sup>119</sup>

Elite Armenians in Istanbul feared that the decree’s declaration of equality for all Ottoman subjects, which effectively put an end to the traditional legal distinction between Muslims and Christians, would result in the dismantling of the traditional *millet* structure and consequently disempower them. In contrast, many Armenians of the *rayah* (peasant) class and the merchant/artisan class welcomed their potential empowerment which the Armenian community and the security against injustices that the decree promised them.<sup>120</sup>

Political divisions among Ottoman subjects and administrators kept state officials from fully implementing the stipulated ideals of the decree. Since neither the Muslim nor the Christian inhabitants of the Empire were particularly keen on a multifaith military, Christians were in practice exempted from military service on the condition that they paid the *bedel-i askeri* fee, which served as a sort of replacement for the *cizye* tax, historically imposed on non-Muslims living in Muslim-controlled areas, which the 1856 decree had abolished.<sup>121</sup>

Ottoman officials and Kurdish elites in Eastern Anatolia ostensibly attempted to

---

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 57, fn. 16.

<sup>120</sup> Migirdich Dadian, “La Société Arménienne Contemporaine: Les Arméniens de l’Empire Ottoman,” *La Revue des Deux Mondes* (June 1867): 803-827.

<sup>121</sup> Stanford Shaw, “The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 4 (October 1975): 421-459.

limit the degree to which Armenians influenced political decision-making. Between 1856 and 1908, the number of Armenians in the service of the Ottoman state varied from province to province. In provinces where Armenians were not as numerous and not located near the border, such as Diyarbakır, Mamuretülaziz, and Bitlis (after it was created as a separate *vilayet* in 1875), Armenian influence in local government grew significantly. According to Mesrob Krikorian, Armenians in the Diyarbakır province during the last half of the nineteenth century served in “posts in the political administration, justice mechanical works, finance, public health, education, and the secretariat”; however, “in the administration of public life they were mostly subordinate officials, very rarely being given high position.”<sup>122</sup> By contrast, in provinces that were more highly populated with Armenians and that were near the border with Russia, Ottoman officials were more wary and restrictive of Armenian participation in governance. Regarding the province of Van, Krikorian notes, “whereas in other provinces [the Armenians] worked...in technical, educational, agricultural, medical and police departments, their contribution in Van in these fields of public life was small.”<sup>123</sup>

Armenians living in areas that were not heavily populated by Kurds and under stronger central control were allowed greater participation in public life. Armenians in the provinces of Sivas and Trabzon were more influential than Armenians in Erzurum and Van in finance, justice, and political administration in spite of the fact that they were not as numerous.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Mesrob K. Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire 1860-1908* (London, Henley, and Boston: Routledge, 1977), 23.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 51, 59.

The *Hatt-ı Hümayûn*'s stipulation that the Ottoman state should treat all subjects without "distinction of class" and place the "temporal administration of the Christian or other non-Muslim communities" under the "safeguard of an Assembly to be chosen from among...both ecclesiastics and laymen" was unpopular with much of the Armenian urban aristocracy.<sup>125</sup> They feared that the proposed reforms would create a "state within a state" which would weaken their sociopolitical position in the Empire.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, Armenian liberals moved quickly to implement the proposed reforms. In 1857, they drafted a constitution, which the joint ecclesiastical-civil *millet* assembly accepted, but it lasted only two months. During the next two years, the Armenian intelligentsia made some revisions of the constitution in order to gain more supporters. A different draft was accepted by the newly convened *millet* assembly in 1860, which lasted for sixteen months. However, infighting between liberal and obscurantist elements of the Armenian *millet* prompted the Sublime Porte to intervene and suspend the constitution. A third and last draft of the constitution was finally approved in March 1863 after Ottoman Foreign Minister Ali Paşa bade the Armenian Patriarch revise and amend the 1860 draft. The 1863 constitution subordinated the patriarch and the ecclesiastical and civil councils to the Armenian National Assembly. However, the stipulations regarding membership of the assembly greatly favored the Armenian bourgeoisie of Istanbul, who were to hold occupy eighty of 140 available seats in the assembly. The clergy held only twenty seats and the Armenian provinces only forty. Even with the new arrangements, the Porte, the Armenian *amira* class, and *amira*-backed clergy, including Patriarch

---

<sup>125</sup> *Islahat Fermanı* [Rescript of Reform], 18 February 1856, <http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/reform.htm>, accessed June 16, 2014.

<sup>126</sup> Libaridian, "The Ideology of the Armenian Liberation," 115.

Stephan, were still loath to implement the reforms. But mounting pressures from Britain and from within the Armenian *millet* forced them to action. In order to force the patriarch and the Porte to implement the draft, some Armenians vandalized the Patriarchate in Kumkapı.<sup>127</sup>

During the heated negotiations for reform in Istanbul, communities of Armenians throughout the east agitated for change on their own terms. The promised reform had the effect of heightening Armenian expectations for political improvement throughout Cilicia, Central Anatolia, and Eastern Anatolia. However, the state was reluctant to implement reforms in many regions because they estimated that the more conservative elements of the Muslim population would react to them more strongly.

An insurrectionist spirit was most present in the Armenian strongholds of Van and Zeytun during the early 1860s. In the spring of 1862, some 20,000 Armenians and Kurds gathered from the Van region engaged in combat with the local government. It is unclear what exactly provoked the conflict, but a notable fact about the incident is that Armenians and Kurds joined forces and that many on both sides died. However, the conflict did not capture international attention. Nersisian asserts this as evidence of a Kurdish-Armenian union against the Ottoman government. However, given the history of the Armenians and Kurds, it may have been another internecine conflict more than a purely antigovernment uprising.<sup>128</sup>

The 1862 Zeytun rebellion, which occurred right after the rebellion at Van, captured more international attention, and much more has been written about it. The

---

<sup>127</sup> Dadian, "La Societ  Arm nienne Contemporaine," 20-23; Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 123-124.

<sup>128</sup> *Hambavaber Rusiyo* 21, 1862, cited in *ibid.*, 93.

Ottomans had previously honored the autonomy of the Armenians in the region of Zeytun. During the 1830s, the Ottomans commended the Zeytuni priest Der-Ohan Der-Hagopian, also known as Deli Keşiş, for successfully repelling the troops of Ibrahim Paşa of Egypt.<sup>129</sup> However, since state officials were scrambling for new sources of revenue in the aftermath of the Crimean War, they looked to the Armenian communities of Zeytun, whom they claimed were in arrears to the Ottoman state from years of tax exemption. In 1860, Armenian elites in Zeytun submitted the following list of grievances to the Porte. 1) They were overtaxed. The *bedel-i askeri* was 100,000 *kuruş*, the *ağnam* tax was at 50,000 *kuruş*, the state tax, which they had not paid in years was raised to 25,000 *kuruş*. 2) Their lands were being usurped by Muslim migrants from Russia and other parts of the Ottoman Empire whom state officials settled in the Zeytun region.<sup>130</sup>

A number of Armenians drew inspiration from France's intervention in Mount Lebanon on behalf of the Maronite Christians in 1861, which resulted in the creation of a semiautonomous *mutasarrifiyya* of Lebanon, which was under the control of an outside Christian and had France's guarantee of protection. In the same year, Prince Levon, an Armenian from Hajin with strong kinship ties to Armenians in Zeytun, went to Paris to petition Napoleon III to push the Porte to create a like political entity for the Armenians in Zeytun. Napoleon III allegedly entertained the idea at first,<sup>131</sup> although he demanded that the Zeytuntsi Armenians enter into communion with the Catholic Church, like the Maronites had done centuries ago.

---

<sup>129</sup> Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 94.

<sup>130</sup> J. Aramian, *Zeytunsik yev Lusavorchagan Hayk* (Constantinople: Dabakrutun Aramian, 1867), 20-21.

<sup>131</sup> Nikolai Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi* [History of the Ottoman Empire], trans. Nilüfer Epçeli (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2005), 546.

News of the political aspirations of Prince Levon spread quickly among Armenian Gregorian ecclesiastics, local Muslims of Zeytun, and the Sublime Porte, all of whom condemned his actions. The Armenian Church and church-supporting *amiras* bade the Zeytuntsis not accept communion with the Catholics lest it embolden other Armenians to reject their ecclesiastical authority in favor of hopes of foreign governments. J. Aramian, an Armenian *amira* from Istanbul, reacted to some Zeytuntsi Armenians' entertaining the idea of adopting communion with the following passage:

A nation that wants autonomy (*ishkhanutyun*) and completely attacks another authority and severely insults it; this nation, we say, has no other future than slavery. Because by such means every individual combats and suppresses one another thus prompting complaints and chaos emerges.... When the people and the Patriarch are at odds, then disorder ensues.... One day it is the Armenians of Zeytun who become Catholics, then another day it is the Armenians of Hajin, then another day those of Elbistan, then those of Bitlis, Erzincan, etc. There cannot be an *ishkhanutun* for us Armenians because the *ishkhan* is us, and if a crown is presented to us, then all of the Armenians should put their heads under it.<sup>132</sup>

The Sublime Porte ordered the *mutasarrıf* of Maraş, Ali Paşa, to begin gathering forces to thwart potential rebellion by revolutionary Armenians. Trepidation pervaded many, but not all, the Muslim communities of Zeytun, particularly the recent Circassian and Crimean Tatar immigrants, who feared Armenian persecution and domination in the event that the Armenians achieved autonomous control over Zeytun. Widespread conflict was sparked in July 1862, when a Turk from Ketman was killed. Local Muslims accused Armenians of murder and retaliated by murdering an Armenian from the nearby village of Alabaş.<sup>133</sup> Conflict escalated when the Armenians of Alabaş, who claimed that Muslims were encroaching on their land and unjustly expanding control over it, launched

---

<sup>132</sup> Aramian, *Zeytuntsik yev Lusavorchagan Hayk*, 8-10.

<sup>133</sup> Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 115-116.

a full invasion of Ketman, killing sixteen people, including children as young as five, and abducting the village's women.<sup>134</sup> News of the horrific events were made known in late August in *Tasvir-i Efkar*, a widely read periodical circulating in Istanbul, as well.<sup>135</sup>

In the aftermath of the Ketman incident, calls for rebellion and independence increased among Armenians throughout Zeytun. The growing agitation prompted the Porte to order Aziz Paşa to organize some forty thousand soldiers in the region to march on Zeytun. Aziz's forces consisted of about twenty thousand Kurdish, Avşar, and Circassian *başibozuks* who torched villages and plundered and ransacked churches. Most of the Muslims in the Zeytun region sided with the Ottoman force except for the Turkmen Kozanoğlu tribe, who pledged neutrality. However, the *başibozuks*, many of whom even sold their houses to "buy mules to transport the women of Zeytun back with them" underestimated the organizational capabilities of the force of some five thousand Zeytuntsi Armenians, who managed to rout a large number of state forces and force them to retreat.<sup>136</sup> In the aftermath of an embarrassing defeat, the Ottomans brought together an even larger force to subjugate the Zeytuntsis. Before their arrival, however, a delegation from Zeytun reached Istanbul where they petitioned the Armenian Patriarch and several *amiras* to persuade the Sublime Porte to halt all operations. Fearing foreign intervention and international embarrassment, the Sublime Porte ordered troops to stand

---

<sup>134</sup> Ali Ağa, the *mutasarrıf* of Maraş, to the *mutasarrıf* of Aleppo, BBA, A.MKT.MHM 244/10, 24 Rebiyülahır 1279/19 October 1862.

<sup>135</sup> Necdet Hayta, *Tasvir-i Efkar Gazetesi (1862-1869)* (Ankara: TC Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002), 201.

<sup>136</sup> Aghassi estimates the number to be ten thousand, but it seems greatly exaggerated and cannot be corroborated in other sources. I was unable to locate any Ottoman documents detailing the number of casualties. Yet Aghassi makes it clear that Muslim losses far outnumbered Armenian losses. Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 134.



down. However, since the Zeytuntsis did not secure an agreement with France, and since the *amira* class and many of the Gregorian clergy saw their leanings towards the Pope as a sort of betrayal, they had little leverage against the Ottoman authorities and agreed to restore order to its former state.

The Zeytun revolt, nonetheless, was championed as a huge success among Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire, Russian, and Europe. In Tiflis, Armenian patriots and mainly youth groups used the opportunity of the Zeytun incident to encourage resistance. In the journal “Crane of the Armenian World” they called upon Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire to join Russian Armenians in solidarity: “we are happy that our brave Zeytunis’ uprising (avrek) has crushed [the Turks]. However, the participation of the Armenians of Russia is not enough to alleviate the bitter situation of the poor and destitute orphans and widows left by the Armenians who have come under the sword of the Turks.”<sup>137</sup>

Rebellion spread to Muş in 1863, where Armenians rose up against local Kurdish groups. Emboldened by the promulgation of the Armenian Constitution, the Armenian inhabitants of Muş rose in open revolt against local Kurds. Upon threats of retaliation, local Armenians sent a delegation to Istanbul to expose the abuses of the Kurds, demand that the Sublime Porte provide the Armenians with reparations for their losses to local Kurdish marauders, and protect them against oppression. Yet upon its arrival in Istanbul, the Armenian delegation from Muş was met with indifference by the Grand Vizier Fuat

---

<sup>137</sup> *Krunk Hayots Ashkharhin* 10 (1862), 778-779, cited in M.G. Nersisian, *Hay Zhoghovrdi Azatagrakan Paykare Turkakan Brnapetutyun Dem: 1850-1890* [The Armenian Peoples’ Struggle Against Turkish Aggression: 1850-1890] (Yerevan: HH GAA “Gitutyun” Hratarakchutyun, 2002), 90.

Paşa who dismissed their complaints as trivial and unworthy of serious attention.

Pushing the issue further, the delegates threatened to abandon their lands and migrate to Russia unless the Porte took action. Yet the delegation's importuning left Fuat Paşa only more irritated, and he responded that they "could go where they pleased and that the Russian territory would be perfectly open to them." Three hundred families from the Muş *sancak* decided to migrate to Georgia upon hearing of the Ottoman state's apathy towards their plight.<sup>138</sup>

Consul Taylor wrote a report in the same year confirming that increasing numbers of Armenians throughout Eastern Anatolia were contemplating migration and conversion to Catholicism:

I must call your attention to the statements contained in Mr. Taylor's dispatch to your Excellency of the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, respecting the ill-treatment to which the native Christians of the Pashalic [*sic*] are subjected, and the serious consequences to the Porte which may result therefrom. Mr. Taylor states that so severe is the oppression [the Christians of Diyarbakır] experience, that large numbers will probably join the Latin Church, in order to obtain the protection of the French Consulate; and, further, that about 1,400 families are preparing to emigrate to Russian Armenia.<sup>139</sup>

In hope of gaining foreign protection against local abuses, Armenians also converted to Islam and Protestantism. A letter from Boghos Tumayants, an Armenian clergyman in Erzurum, in 1876 reveals that an increasing numbers of Armenians were turning to Islam in hopes of sparing themselves from persecution. The converts from Muş, who numbered about five hundred, wrote to him saying, "we are becoming Turks [*ge*

---

<sup>138</sup> Frederick Millingen, *La Turquie sous le Règne d'Abdul-Aziz, 1862-1867* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1868), 173-174.

<sup>139</sup> Earl Russell to Sir H. Bulwer, 13 August 1863, *Turkey*, no. 17 (1877), part II, 110, no. 130, cited in Bilal Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians* (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1982), 1: 45.

*dajeganank*, implying that they are converting to Islam], [therefore] we are becoming free; this we do because we have no leader or patriarch to care for us.”<sup>140</sup> Tumayants’ letter also notes that many Armenians desired that the sultan indicate locations that they might settle in order avoid persecution.<sup>141</sup>

Conversion to Islam typically came at a high cost for many Armenians. Community Muslim leaders had converts change their names, placed them under scrutiny to make sure they were no longer practicing Christianity, and subjected them to the local Muslim norms. Although they were not technically discouraged from speaking in Armenian, they were discouraged from continuing to associate with their former confessional communities, and tended to adopt the Kurdish and Turkish languages. Gregorian Armenians often rejected converts to Islam as heretics and traitors. Although Ottoman law technically forbade punishment of anyone who departed from or converted to another faith, Eastern Anatolia was beyond the reach of the law, and Armenians who converted back to Christianity from Islam were still subjected to ostracism, harassment, and death threats.

Conversion to Protestantism was becoming an increasingly popular option for Armenians, who were attracted to the missionaries by the educational opportunities and potential recourse against abuses that they provided them. Although Protestant converts never constituted a large percentage of the Armenian community in any particular place, many members of the Gregorian clergy treated them with suspicion and disdain.

Patriarch Stephan had Armenian evangelical clerics arrested and put in jail. He also

---

<sup>140</sup> Letter from Boghos Tumayants to Srvantsian, October 23, 1876, Erzurum, Simeon, ed., *Divan Hayots Patmutyun*, 13: 285.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 286-288.

issued an order against participation in Protestant activities and sought to punish those who tried to conceal information about Protestant activities.<sup>142</sup> In 1848, Reverend Schneider reported that many Armenian converts to Protestantism “were cast into prison, several were bastinadoed...multitudes were thrown out of their houses, some by their wives—and some by their neighbors. A few have been exiled.”<sup>143</sup>

Protestants gained more freedom in 1850 when the British pushed the sultan to decree the creation of the Protestant *millet*. The *millet* granted a Protestant Agent, who was a lay Armenian, nominal authority over the *millet*.<sup>144</sup> Despite the efforts of the Sublime Porte to provide a form of protection for the Protestants, the Gregorian clergy continued to persecute them throughout the 1850s and 1860s.

Persecution was particularly acute in Eastern Anatolia where venal, corrupt Ottoman officials accepted bribes by Armenian clerics not to report acts of persecution and to prevent Protestant victims from mobilizing support on their behalf. In a visit to Van in 1851, British lieutenant Frederick Walpole wrote:

The Pasha of Van during my stay was represented as one of the old school; he ate money to any extent, and his exactions had made all men his enemies. The Armenian bishop had bribed him to set his sublime face against the Protestant

---

<sup>142</sup> Vartan Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1863: A Study of its Historical Development* (Istanbul: Aras, 1988), 42.

<sup>143</sup> E.C.A. Schneider, “Letter to the Ladies Benevolent Society [of St. George’s, Delaware], Broosa, April 28, 1848,” Collection of the Author, cited in full in Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2000), Appendix I, 460-461. Although James Reid acknowledges that “internal evidence suggests that the persecution originated among the Armenians themselves, since wives and parents banished husbands and children from their homes,” he assumes that “the other aspect of oppression—the subjection of some to the bastinado—suggests that the Ottoman government sponsored these persecutions.” He fails to acknowledge that the Armenian *millet* maintained jurisdiction over the affairs of the Armenian community. While the Ottoman government did not intervene to prevent the *milletbaşı* from carrying out violent punishment, they were not the ones making the rulings.

<sup>144</sup> Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System*, 44.

converts; this, however, he found dangerous work. The bishop could bring no charge either against them, or against their teachers; the latter rather endeavouring to teach them in their church, than to lead them from it: but the Armenians are represented as being bigoted to the last degree.<sup>145</sup>

In 1860, a group of missionaries assigned to the Eastern Turkey mission wrote that the Protestants continued to be heavily persecuted by both Gregorians and Muslims, and that the local authorities even denied the existence of the Imperial Decree of 1856:

We need not multiply instances to indicate the power of the more influential Christian sects to employ, by means of bribes, the Turkish officials to oppress the smaller sects, especially the Protestants; nor need we multiply instances to show that there is still strong feeling of hatred on the part of the Moslems against Christians generally.... Pashas have used the influence of the mollahs to excite in the mosques public sentiment against the Christians.... In the Diarbekir Pashalic several pashas have to the English Consul entirely denied both the reception of any such document as the Hatti Humayoun and also its existence in the archives of the Diarbekir Pashalic.... In the region of Marash and Aintab, so grievous is the military tax that Christians would prefer to enter the army.<sup>146</sup>

In some cases, the Ottoman authorities reportedly attempted to defend Protestants, but the Gregorian Armenians insisted on persecuting Protestants nonetheless. During the late 1860s in Eğin, near Kharput, a mob consisting of Muslims demolished the frame of a church under construction and beat a Protestant to death in spite of the local *meclis* appointing a police force to guard the church. The *meclis* and the *paşa* acquitted the defendants on the grounds that they did not destroy anything since the church was not completely constructed. In Erzurum an Armenian *vartabed* named Membre threatened to have the *vali* of Erzurum removed if he attempted to defend the construction of a

---

<sup>145</sup> Frederick Walpole, *The Ansayrii (or Assassins) with Travels in the Further East Including a Visit to Nineveh* (London: Richard Bentley Press, 1851), 2: 179.

<sup>146</sup> Dwight W. Marsh et al. from the North American Mission to the President of the Evangelical Alliance, cited in *Evangelical Christendom* 14 (1860): 439-440.

Protestant church there. Policemen “demolished the front wall.”<sup>147</sup> At Bitlis in Sept. 29, 1869, a Protestant was beaten by Armenians “on his way to procure the evidence of certain Mussulmen who had been eye-witnesses of the previous transaction.” The *vali* “with remarkably impartiality” had all parties placed under arrest. However, under pressure of the leading Armenians in the community, he set the guilty free.<sup>148</sup>

A complaint from the Protestant leader in Diyarbakır reveals a few incidents in which Protestant Armenians were subjected to mistreatment by both Armenian Gregorian and Ottoman authorities in small localities. In Diyarbakır *vilayet* in the *kaza* of Hayriye, a leader in the Protestant church by the name of Bedros was taken in captivity because of some debts that he owed. The *müdür* of Hayriye, Said Bey, took him to the *meclis* where he gained the approval of the *meclis* members to have him beaten, bound, and imprisoned. Although he was allowed to return home after spending a significant amount of time in prison, he was unable to recover from the physical effects of torture in prison and died. In Siirt, a leader of the Armenian Gregorian church by the name of Ove forced Protestants to come out of their shops and houses and subjected them to persecution in the streets. He accused one fifty-five-year-old Protestant man of killing someone while he was only three years old. As punishment he was forced to pay 30,000 *kuruş* and had his property confiscated.<sup>149</sup>

Catholics reportedly participated in the persecution of the Protestants as well. Seven Protestant Christians were persecuted in Mardin on July 28, 1868 “at the

---

<sup>147</sup> Members of the Evangelical Alliance, *Evangelical Christendom: A Monthly Chronicle of the Churches* 9, November 2, 1868, 438-439

<sup>148</sup> *Evangelical Christendom* 10 (1869): 385.

<sup>149</sup> BBA, HR.SYS 1774/19, 12 August 1866.

instigation of the Roman Catholic Patriarch Pillibos, with the connivance of Ismail Pasha, “the *vali* of Diyarbakır.”<sup>150</sup> It should be noted that Catholics were more established in the Ottoman system than the Protestants, even in locations where they were fewer in number than Armenian Protestants. Missionaries in the Eastern Turkey Mission report: “in Kharput, though the Catholics are only one-fourth as numerous as the Protestants, civil head is acknowledged to be more powerful than the pasha. Being promptly and vigorously sustained in all his demands by the French Embassy, he always triumphs.”<sup>151</sup>

When Migirdich Khrimian was elected Patriarch of Istanbul in 1869, he shifted the focus away from the alleged threat of the Protestants and onto the plight of the Armenian *rayah* class. Clerics who thought similarly to Khrimian began to champion a change away from persecution to simply competing alongside the Protestant organizations. Garegin Srvantsiants, an influential thinker and ecclesiastical leader in Istanbul, believed that the answer to the divisions that were occurring within the Armenian community was in developing the education system throughout the *millet*. He believed that via education the Gregorian church would gain popularity among the Armenians. Srvantsiants believed that the Armenian nation had become paralyzed and it was necessary to treat them with what he called two kinds of physicians. One physician “for the spirit” who would consist of ecclesiastics, and one physician “for the body” which would consist of patriotic (*hayrenaser*) *ishkhans*. These two classes, represented by the [metaphor of] two powerful physicians, must take the paralytic with the right and left hand, and revive the Armenians.”<sup>152</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup> *Evangelical Christendom* 9 (1868): 421-422.

<sup>151</sup> Evangelical Alliance, *Evangelical Christendom*, November 2, 1868, 440.

<sup>152</sup> *Ardzvi Vaspurakan* 2 (1861), 45.

It is noteworthy that not all Armenians and Kurds were in conflict with each other. Bayrbutian asserts that union was a result of the “Muslim working peasantry relating to the Armenian peasantry’s social struggle and desiring a victory for the Armenian peasantry with hopes that it could possibly improve their condition as well.”<sup>153</sup> Very often, the Armenians and the Kurds would gather together against the government. Such was the case in 1864 Armenians and Kurds in Sasun jointly resisted Ottoman Turkish forces.<sup>154</sup>

Yet given the long list of grievances assembled by Armenian clergymen in the East which they submitted to the Sublime Porte and the Armenian National Assembly, Kurdish-Armenian alliances appeared to be more the exception than the rule. Reports continued to emerge in the Armenian community that Kurdish tribes plundered, harassed, threatened, and extorted villagers throughout Eastern Anatolia. It should be noted that other Muslim and/or Kurdish villagers were also the victims of marauders and bandits, but Armenians had more of an organized network through which their voices could be heard. By contrast, Muslim villagers had little recourse against other Muslim aggressors. A letter from the inhabitants of Muş in 1864 contains a long list of the types of abuses that the Kurds committed against Armenians. They scattered flocks, abducted women, forced women to convert to Islam, extorted money and resources from villagers, committed acts of arson, beat up Armenians (sometimes for just mere amusement), threatened violence against informers, conducted night raids into villages, raided and

---

<sup>153</sup> Ohannes Grigorievich Injikian, *Burjuazia Osmanskoy Imperii* [The Bourgeoisie of the Ottoman Empire] (Yerevan: Akademiya Nauk Armyanskoi SSR, 1977), 86.

<sup>154</sup> Murch, Tiflis, 124, cited in V.A. Bayburtian, *Hay-Krdakan Haraberutyunnere Osmanyan Kaisrutyunum* [Armenian-Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire] (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1989), 134-135.



ransacked churches, and even killed some Armenians.<sup>155</sup> A most telling reaction to the Ottoman reform efforts came in a letter from the Armenian inhabitants of Muş to the Sublime Porte in 1868:

We give our thanks to our most helpful and omnipotent Ottoman Empire...and the Tanzimat and promised reforms [*teşkilat*], which were designed to provide freedom and security. However, our unfortunate land of Muş has benefitted neither from the Tanzimat nor the *teşkilat*. We are still pestered, harmed, and oppressed unsparingly by barbarians.<sup>156</sup>

Another incident that exposed the general failure of the Ottoman state to provide security for Armenians was the continued seizures of Armenian land in Çarsancak (modern-day Akpazar located between Harput and Dersim) by local Kurdish groups. In 1865, Armenians complained that twenty-four local *derebeys* had demanded heavy taxes upon them and forced them to accept high-interest loans to help pay off their debts. If they were not able to pay, the Kurds would justify taking ownership of their lands and imposing a form of debt bondage upon them.<sup>157</sup> In response to the complaints, the Sublime Porte commissioned Derviş Paşa to go to Çarsancak and investigate the matter. However, the Armenians expected nothing to come of the investigation and decided to send a delegation to Istanbul to demand that seven *derebeys* be brought to Istanbul to stand trial and that the Armenians' holding privileges over their lands be restored. The delegation's efforts were to no avail. The Sublime Porte argued that the *derebeys* had held their lands for a long period of time and that the Armenians were merely mortgagees

---

<sup>155</sup> Petition from the inhabitants of Muş to the Armenian National Assembly, May 15, 1864, Simeon, ed., *Divan Hayots Patmutyun*, 13: 59-64.

<sup>156</sup> Petition from the inhabitants of Muş to the Armenian National Assembly, December 15, 1868, Simeon, ed., *Divan Hayots Patmutyun*, 13: 143-144.

<sup>157</sup> Hagop Barsoumian, "The Eastern Question and the Tanzimat Era," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 2: 194.

of the properties in question. Therefore the former maintained the privilege of reducing the latter's access to it.<sup>158</sup> A British soldier, Frederick Millingen, who was in command of a regular army unit in the Van region, reports that some members of the delegation, on charges of making excessive demands, were held in jail for a brief period until they promised to return to Çarsacak.<sup>159</sup> The Çarsacak case was a reflection on the unfortunate fact that increasing numbers of Armenians were losing their lands and access to resources to cunning, threatening Muslims and Kurds in Palu and Harput.

The Ottoman state's seeming failure to deliver on its promises of security and equal treatment for the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia coupled with the lackluster results of *millet* reform led many Armenians to begin entertaining the idea of looking abroad for support. In 1868, the British and Ottoman authorities discovered that an Armenian bishop in Erzurum named Harontion was collaborating with political activists in the Russian government. He received payment from wealthy Russian bureaucrats to keep an eye on events in Eastern Anatolia. He helped Armenians in Van, Bitlis, Muş, Erzurum, and Arapkir obtain Russian passports and had allies in the clergy, such as Bishop Iknadiyos of Van, who took a pro-Russian stance.<sup>160</sup>

In spite of Harontion's activities, many Armenians, particularly from the middle class, were hesitant over the idea of summoning Russia as a liberator. Evidence of this lay in the fact that Khrimian, after he was elected Patriarch in 1869, went through the conduits of the Ottoman state in order to pursue reform. However, throughout the 1870s,

---

<sup>158</sup> Armenian *Milli Meclis* report, 1865 <http://team-aow.discuforum.info/t6880-MIRAKYAN-ERMENI-ASIRETL.htm>, accessed December 8, 2014.

<sup>159</sup> Millingen, *La Turquie sous le règne d'Abdul-Aziz*, 174-175.

<sup>160</sup> Erzurum Consul to the British Ambassador in Istanbul, BBA, HR.SYS 2819/6, 26 February 1868.

especially after rebellion and conflict broke out in the Balkans and in parts of Eastern Anatolia, an increasing number of Armenians drew closer to Russia. The ongoing plight of the Armenian *rayah* class, in spite of *millet* reform, made many Armenians increasingly cynical towards the Armenian Constitution of 1863 as well. Many began to believe that real reform had not actually been achieved, but that the Constitution was a façade. The influential Armenian novelist Raffi remarked that the Armenian Constitution was merely a “weapon in the hands of the Ottoman government to distract Armenians from their real problems.”<sup>161</sup>

On September 4, 1869, the National Assembly elected Khrimian Patriarch of Istanbul against the will of the sultan and his grand vizier, who both saw him as an agitator moving against the current of state interests. On his way to Istanbul, he toured Erzurum and its environs, where he heard the protests of disenfranchised villagers and gathered *takrirs* to present to the Armenian National Assembly and ultimately the Sublime Porte. Khrimian’s election marked a significant change in the Armenian *millet*. It was an indication of further transformation within the Armenian community away from upper-class/middle-class divisions between Armenians towards the question of the *rayahs* in Eastern Anatolia and the Armenian nation.<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>161</sup> Raffi, *Yerkeri Zhoghovadsu* [Anthology of Works] (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1958), 9: 263, cited in Libaridian, *Modern Armenia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 70.

<sup>162</sup> Ghazarian, *Arevmtahayeri*, 569.

### Conclusion

Divisions among Ottoman, British, Armenian, and Kurdish leaders over the question of how to manage the tensions that had arisen in Eastern Anatolian society during the 1830s and 1840s led to a new set of unexpected tensions, which the various different actors lacked the resources to mitigate. At heart, Ottoman administrators were committed to ‘conquering Kurdistan’ through a calculated strategy of centralization, but it did not amount to much. Worried that administrative reforms conducted too rapidly and forcefully could rupture the delicate balance of power that existed between the Ottoman state and the Kurds, state officials moved with extreme caution, slowing seizing the reins of power behind a thin façade of renegotiated autonomy for Kurdish groups.

During the 1850s and 1860s, the British remained committed to the idea of liberal reforms for non-Muslims with the hopes of undermining the legitimacy of Russia’s claims for diplomatic intervention into the Ottoman Empire. The British victory against the Russians during the Crimean War gave them political leverage over the Ottoman Empire, whom they steered in a direction that Ottoman officials were reluctant to pursue. In the minds of many British administrators and liberal Ottomans, the *tanzimat* reforms were meant to be a politically liberal effort that would effectuate a drastic transformation of the sociopolitical landscape of the Ottoman Empire. However, to many of the Ottoman administrators, especially Ali and Fuat Paşa, the architects of the *tanzimat* reforms, the *tanzimat* were simply an excuse to expand the bureaucracy and bring the heretofore semiautonomous Kurdish groups under their wing. Ultimately, the Ottomans sought a modernized military, with conscription and the latest technology, through reforms, and sought to make the Kurds a part of it by recruiting them as *başbozüks*

placed under the direct command of the Ottoman brigadier general.

Armenian leaders were committed to consolidating their power within the broader Armenian community, which had been ruptured by several external and internal forces between the 1820s and 1840s, and holding onto the traditional order through which they had dominated the *millet* between 1750 and 1850. However, since the Ottomans were under pressure by the British and many liberal Armenians to deliver on their promises, the Armenian community was forced to undergo considerable transformation. Yet it was in the midst of that transformation that lower-class Armenians gained a voice in Armenian politics, right at the very time that Kurdish society was becoming increasingly fragmented and competitive over limited spaces of power. Since Kurdish society lacked a central leader around which to rally, they were greatly divided among themselves over which direction to pursue. Some of the peasant Kurds supported the Armenians and sought alliance with them. On the other hand, many of the seminomadic groups, who had been forced by the Ottoman state to settle, as well as many of the traditional Kurdish elites, who remained in power after the Ottomans exiled Nurullah Bey in 1849, increased the burden on the Armenian peasantry as a means of alleviating their resource deficits.

The Eastern Anatolian peasantry was first caught in the crossfire between competing Kurdish elites. After the Crimean War, several peasant-landlord conflicts ensued. As Istanbul and the European powers became increasingly involved in these conflicts, they developed an ethnic dimension.

## CHAPTER 5

### LATENT POLARIZATION ALONG RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC LINES, 1868-1878

The term polarization is often used in scholarship with the meaning of growing tensions and mistrust between at least two large groups of people that lead them to divide themselves along particular identity lines. The term is frequently used, and aptly so, to describe the state of Eastern Anatolian society during WWI. Sizeable numbers of Turks and Kurds in powerful positions grew so resentful and mistrustful towards Armenians in general that they sought to forcibly remove them by either by killing them, deporting them, or by erasing their religious and ethnic identities by compelling them to convert to Islam and cease using the Armenian language. At the same time, large numbers of Armenians had grown so resentful towards Muslims, Turks, and Kurds that they were willing to help Russia invade and occupy Eastern Anatolia, organize volunteer units with the aim of killing and harassing civilians and combatants, and stage rebellions with the aim of achieving dominance over a particular region. Yet, scholars continue to debate the reasons for polarization, its extent, and the time at which it began to occur.<sup>1</sup> It is the

---

<sup>1</sup> For some examples of relations between Muslims and Christians described as a polarization see Stephan Astourian, "Genocidal Process: Reflections on the Armeno-Turkish Polarization," in *The Armenian Genocide: History Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 53-79; Astourian, "Testing World-System Theory, Cilicia (1830s-1890s): Armenian-Turkish Polarization and the Ideology of Modern Ottoman Historiography" (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles,

argument of this chapter that the experience of Eastern Anatolian society during the 1870s can best be described as a latent ethnic and religious polarization. A confluence of factors, including political and economic instability in the Ottoman Empire, increasing international diplomatic intervention, the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman war, political activism among Christians, and other factors caused actors to imagine larger communities based on a shared ethnicity and religion and to place primacy on ethnicity and religion as the principal markers of individual identity.

### Crisis at the Head

Deepening religious and ethnic divisions in Eastern Anatolia cannot be understood without taking into consideration the political and economic instability that the Ottoman Empire faced during the 1870s. This period of instability was partly a ripple effect of the political and economic shocks in both Europe and in Istanbul. Bismarck's victory against France in 1870 and his successful efforts to reunify Germany affected Istanbul indirectly by diverting the attention of Britain and France from the Ottoman Empire, thus opening space for Russia to reassert itself in global politics. At the London Convention of March 1871, Russia managed to annul the stipulation of the Treaty of Paris that forbade Russian warships from sailing in the Black Sea.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of this victory, Russia began reasserting its role in the Ottoman Empire as a protector of

---

1996); Fatma Müge Göçek, "The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish, and Arab Nationalisms," in *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East*, ed. Fatma Müge Göçek (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), especially 15-26.

<sup>2</sup> The Treaty still affirmed the sultan's right to open and close the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits as he saw fit. See Nihan Ünlü, *The Legal Regime of the Turkish Straits* (The Hague; New York: Nijhoff Publishers, 2002), 31.

Orthodox Christians. While Grand Vizier Ali Paşa, one of the main architects and implementers of the *tanzimat* reforms, stood his ground against Russia's diplomatic advances, Ottoman policy toward Russia changed after his death in September 1871.<sup>3</sup> Mahmud Nedim Paşa (nicknamed Nedimoff on account of his Russian sympathies) appointed as Ali Paşa's successor, maintained a close relationship with the Russian ambassador to Istanbul, Nikolai Ignatiev, and moved the Ottoman Empire closer to Russian interests.

The Great Depression, which began in 1873 and lasted until 1879, in Europe and North America deprived the Ottomans of sufficient inflows of foreign capital and slowed overall trade, thrusting the Empire into a recession. By 1875, the Ottomans defaulted on their loan payments and were forced to declare bankruptcy. The Ottoman Empire would not be able to emerge from its depressed economic state until as late as 1896.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the economic crisis does not entirely explain the political destabilization in the Empire during the 1870s. Sultan Abdülhamid II was able to maneuver his way around the West, at least in relation to Eastern Anatolia, and to achieve many of his political aims in spite of poor economic growth up until 1894, when foreign diplomats pressured him to draw up a new reform project in response to an outbreak of violence at Sasun. Nonetheless, the crisis came at an inconvenient political time for the Ottomans, and appeared to exacerbate already existing crises and to stifle any momentum for change.

Between the death of Ali Paşa, who had firm control over policy-making and

---

<sup>3</sup> *Turkey*, no. 16, 42-43.

<sup>4</sup> Şevket Pamuk, "The Ottoman Empire in the 'Great Depression' of 1873-1896," *The Journal of Economic History* 44, no. 1 (March 1984): 114.



policy-enforcement in Istanbul, in 1871 and the succession of Sultan Abdülhamid II to the throne in 1876, the Sublime Porte was in a state of turmoil. In a period of just under five years, the Grand Vizierate changed hands eight times. Leading public officials attempted to outmaneuver each other and manipulate politics to their own advantage. Mahmud Nedim Paşa, who served as Grand Vizier between September 1871 and July 1872 and between August 1875 and May 1876, attempted to steer the empire away from the trajectory of political liberalization that it had been pursuing since 1839 and especially after the Crimean War. He favored restoring power to the sultanate, sought to dismiss and replace statesmen who promoted the policies of Ali and Fuat, and tried to encourage more reactionary sentiments among Muslims against the *tanzimat*. Mahmud Nedim maintained a cordial relationship with the Russian consul Nikolai Ignatiev, looked more toward Russia as an ally, and sought to distance the Ottomans from Britain, who had been instrumental in the implementation of the *tanzimat*.<sup>5</sup>

In July 1872, Sultan Abdülaziz replaced Mahmud Nedim, whom his political opponents accused of corruption and duplicity, with Midhat Paşa, a champion of political liberalization who had a long association with the Young Ottomans and who would play a key role in authoring and promoting the Ottoman constitution of 1876. Only three months later, the sultan decided to appoint Mütercim Mehmet Rüşdi, an advocate and architect of the *tanzimat* reforms, in his stead. In February 1873, Sakızlı Ahmet Esat Paşa, a Turk from Chios, was appointed Grand Vizier. In April 1873, the sultan

---

<sup>5</sup> Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Sultan and the Bureaucracy: The Anti-Tanzimat Concepts of Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Paşa," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 3 (August 1990): 257-274; Roderic Davison, "Mahmud Nedim Pasha," *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

appointed Şirvanlızade Mehmet Rüştü Paşa, a Kurd raised in Amasya whose family was from the Eastern Anatolian town of Şirvan.<sup>6</sup> In February 1874, Hüseyin Avni Paşa, who played a key role in military reform during the 1860s and who was a bitter rival of Mahmud Nedim Paşa, was appointed Grand Vizier. Sakızlı Ahmet Esat Paşa was appointed Grand Vizier for a second time in April 1875 and Mahmud Nedim was appointed again in August 1875. In May 1876, Midhat Paşa, Hüseyin Avni, and Mütercim Mehmet Rüşdi staged a successful coup d'état against Sultan Abdülaziz, whom they replaced with his nephew Murad V. Sultan Abdülaziz reportedly committed suicide on June 4, 1876 (although rumors circulated that he was assassinated). Immediately after the coup, Mahmud Nedim was exiled to Çeşme.<sup>7</sup>

On the surface, political strife at the Sublime Porte appeared to be driven by ideology. Mahmud Nedim favored a stronger role for the sultan in decision-making (against the Sublime Porte, who had dominated decision-making throughout the *tanzimat* period). Nedim's rival Midhat Paşa, on the other hand, favored a constitutional monarchy. However, a deeper look into the facts reveals that personal ambition was a significant reason for the power struggle in the Sublime Porte, and probably overshadowed whatever ideological motivations were at play. Both Mahmud Nedim and his political rival Şirvanlızade Mehmet Rüştü Paşa had ties with the Khalidi-Naqshbandi Sufi movement. Both Hüseyin Avni and Nedim were absolutists and favored increasing the power of the sultan over the Sublime Porte. However, both were engaged in a power

---

<sup>6</sup> Tahsin Özcan, "Mehmed Rüşdî Paşa (Şirvanlızade)," *Yaşamları ve Yapıtlarıyla Osmanlılar Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 1999), 2: 179-180.

<sup>7</sup> Roderic Davison, "Mahmud Nedim Pasha," *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

struggle against each other until Hüseyin Avni's death at the hands of Sultan Abdülaziz's brother-in-law, Çerkes Hasan, in 1876. Nedim's exiling of Hüseyin Avni to Isparta in 1871 deeply embittered the latter against the former. Abdülaziz's reappointment of Nedim to the Grand Vizierate in 1875 led Hüseyin Avni to take his anger out on the sultan by plotting a coup against him.<sup>8</sup> Even if ideology did not necessarily play a role in all the personal struggles between high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrats during the 1870s, competing ideological forces did divide much of Ottoman society during the 1870s, particularly in Eastern Anatolia. The various political and economic crises that Istanbul faced during this period diverted its attention from the periphery and made it increasingly difficult for it to implement reforms there.

#### The New Administrative Reform Effort, Cause and Effect

In 1867, the Sublime Porte began undertaking a series of new administrative reform measures in Eastern Anatolia. The strategy behind the project was to increase the number and types of administrative divisions in the region while integrating an increasing number of locals into the administration activity. The reform project was in large part the application the stipulations of the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of 1856 and was consistent with Ottoman Empire's policy of calculated (re)centralization. The hope of the Ottoman leaders was to meet the competing demands of the British, the Armenians, and the Kurds, while at the same time achieving their own political aims. A number of factors spurred Ottoman administrators towards reform in the region. First, the changing nature of the

---

<sup>8</sup> E. Kuran, "Husayn Awni Pasha," *Encyclopedia of Islam*; Florian Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire: Conspiracies and Political Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 50-53.

Armenian community, which included the unprecedented rebellions of the early 1860s, the promulgation of the Armenian constitution, and the traditional Armenian elite's loss of control over the Armenian community, made many Ottoman administrators fear that ideas of rebellion would spread in the community. Second, administrators worried that Iran and Russia could exploit the growing political instability in the region to their advantage. Third, the British had begun more closely monitoring political activity in Eastern Anatolia and the Sublime Porte wanted to show the British that they had indeed carried out reforms there.

The first project of the new administrative reforms was to apply the *Teşkil-i Vilayet Nizamnamesi*, also commonly known as the 'Law of Vilayets', promulgated in 1864. The objective of this new reform was to replace the *eyalet* system with a system that created more administrative subdivisions. While the traditional *eyalet* system had only the *sancak* subdivision, the *vilayet* system would include the administrative levels of *liva*, *kaza*, and *nahiye*. The *mutassarıf*, an administrator appointed by the Porte, would oversee the affairs of the *liva*, which was also often referred to as the *sancak*, a terminological carry-over from the previous system. He was responsible for the political, financial, and military affairs of the *liva* and was to report to the *vali* of the *vilayet*. The *liva* was divided into several *kazas* governed by *kaymakams*. *Kazas* were subdivided into *nahiyes*, village clusters under the direction of *muhtars*. In 1871, an amendment was made to the law that redefined the powers of the administrators, making the *kaymakams* less involved in financial and military matters.<sup>9</sup> The central treasury would be in charge

---

<sup>9</sup> Géza Dávid, "Administration, Provincial," *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 14-17; Milen V. Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside: Midhat Pasa and the *Vilayet* of Danube, 1864-

of tax collection and the *serasker* would be more directly in charge of conscripting men to the military.<sup>10</sup> The hope of the amendment was to bring military and financial administration more within the purview of Istanbul and thus reduce corruption. In fact, it made it more difficult for the central administration to collect taxes and acquire soldiers and relatively more easy for locals to dodge official demands. This was because state administrators reduced the roles of local middlemen, which made them less inclined to cooperate.<sup>11</sup>

The first step towards administrative reform in Eastern Anatolia was to turn the four Armenian-inhabited *eyalets* in Eastern Anatolia into a number of smaller more centrally governed *vilayets*. In 1867, the Sublime Porte did away with the Kurdistan *vilayet* and created the Diyarbakır *vilayet* in its stead. The Sivas and Erzurum *vilayets* were created in the same year. In 1875, the Ottomans created the *vilayets* of Van and Bitlis, thus splitting the Van *eyalet* into two. A sixth Armenian-inhabited *vilayet*, the Mamuretülaziz Vilayet, was created in 1879. These would become known in Ottoman official parlance as the *vilâyet-i sitte*, meaning the Six Vilayets, where a large number of Armenians dwelt alongside Muslims, and where the reforms stipulated in both the San

---

1868” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006), 82-83; Mahmoud Yazbak, *Haifa in the Late Ottoman Period, 1864-1914: A Muslim Town in Transition* (Boston; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 28-31; For the text of the law itself see *al-Dustur*, Arabic translation from Turkish original, Nawfal Nawfal (Beirut, 1301), 1: 382-395.

<sup>10</sup> Under the 1871 law the system of military recruitment was codified and more specific regulations were laid out regarding the punishment of draft dodgers, conditions for accepting volunteers, and the conditions for exemptions. See Erik Jan Zürcher, “The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice,” *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia*, ed. Erik Jan Zürcher (London: New York, I.B. Tauris, 1999), 83-88.

<sup>11</sup> Kemal Karpat, “Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82- 1893,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 3 (October 1978): 246-247.

Stefano Treaty of 1878 and the subsequent Berlin Treaty of 1878 were to be undertaken for Armenians.

In some *nahiyes*, typically areas that were formally recognized as *hükümet* lands, the Ottomans granted special privileges to select Kurdish groups. In these areas, Kurdish groups achieved power on a par with, and in some cases exceeding, that of the state appointees.<sup>12</sup> Part of these privileges included *de facto* landownership on a scale beyond the norm. For instance, state officials granted the Kiki tribe administrative authority over fifty villages in the Diyarbakır region, all of which were inhabited by members of the tribe.<sup>13</sup> Many Kurdish groups used government privilege to try to acquire landholdings and restore the traditional social order that had prevailed in Eastern Anatolia before the 1840s. In a letter to the *vali* of Van in 1875, the Armenian Patriarch Nerses II noted, “it has been ascertained that some Kurdish *bey*s and Muslim *ağas* have managed to seize fields that have been tilled and worked by our rural population, and to turn them into *ocaklıks*.”<sup>14</sup>

In the spirit of the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* Imperial Edict of 1856, the Ottoman government established increasing numbers of multireligious administrative councils throughout Eastern Anatolia. In 1869, the Sublime Porte founded new councils for the *livas* of Mardin and Hakkari.<sup>15</sup> In 1874, the Ottomans included Christian leaders from

---

<sup>12</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahallî İdareleri, 1840-1880* [Local Ottoman Administration during the Tanzimat Period] (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu Publishing House, 2000), 105.

<sup>13</sup> Yılmazçelik, *XIX Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır*, 169.

<sup>14</sup> Patriarch Nerses to the *Vali* of Van, 21 May 1875, Armenian National Assembly, *Rapports sur l'Oppression des Arméniens en Arménie et dans les Autres Provinces de la Turquie* (London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1877), 40.

<sup>15</sup> In the administrative council of Mardin *liva*, Christians from Mardin and three other surrounding villages were included. İbrahim Özcoşar, *Merkezleşme Sürecinde Bir Taşra*

the Armenian Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Chaldean, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Syriac Catholic, and Protestant communities on the Diyarbakır administrative council. In 1876, the Ottomans expanded the council of Mardin to include leaders from the six different Christian communities.<sup>16</sup>

The increased inclusion of non-Muslims in local administration was a controversial matter. While some Muslims saw these policy changes as generally innocuous, or even welcome, others saw this as weakness on the part of the Ottoman state and a violation of the traditional Muslim-dominated order. In areas where Armenian political activity was strong, such as Van and Muş, Muslim groups were even less receptive to reform measures and feared that they would only serve to embolden Armenian activism. Judging by the various political trends between 1870 and 1915, there appeared to be a correlation between growth in reactionary attitudes toward equal rights among Eastern Anatolian Muslim communities, central government weakness, and the growth in Armenian political activism. The conflagration at Van in 1876, perpetrated by local Muslims against Armenians (an unprecedented act in Van where Ottoman administration was strong) came at the tail end of the Balkan crisis right before the gathering of international diplomats in Istanbul to discuss reform in the Ottoman Empire. Armenian revolutionary activity had been growing around the city since 1872. The mass violence perpetrated by many Muslim groups against the Armenians between October

---

*Kenti Mardin (1800-1900)* [The Rural Town of Mardin During the Period of Centralization (1800-1900)] (Mardin: Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009), 135-141. In Hakkari, the administrative councils included members of the local Nestorian community. BBA, İ.DH 599/41799, 28 Cemaziyülahır 1286/5 October 1869.

<sup>16</sup> Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentlerinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapıları* [The Social and Economic Structure of Anatolian Cities During the Tanzimat Period] (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1991), 236-259.

and December of 1895—which occurred right after Sultan Abdülhamid II announced that he would implement a set of reforms that he had drawn up with Britain, France, and Russia for the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia—is also further evidence of an increase in local Muslim hostility to Armenians corresponding with perceived weakness in the Ottoman central government and the rise of Armenian revolutionary activity.<sup>17</sup>

Alongside administrative reform efforts, Ottoman officials began attempting educational reform in Eastern Anatolia during the 1870s. Funds were set aside for the expansion of *rüşdiye* schools even into remote areas of the newly created *vilayets* and *nahiyes*. For instance, in 1875, the Ottomans earmarked funds and appointed instructors for *rüşdiye* instructors in the villages of Edremit and Zebostan, located in the Van *vilayet*.<sup>18</sup> Similar measures were undertaken for the Diyarbakır *vilayet* around the same time.<sup>19</sup> As was the case with land administration, state officials hoped to strike a balance of power with locals with regard to educational administration. The state-appointed instructors were most often local graduates from seminaries and not appointees from more distant locations.<sup>20</sup> However, the political and economic crises that the Ottoman Empire was facing during the 1870s forced it to slow, if not entirely put off, educational

---

<sup>17</sup> For a text of the promised reforms see Uras, *The Armenians in History*, 545-606. Jelle Verheij argues that the massacres of 1895 were largely a product of the visceral reaction of local Muslims to the reforms. See Jelle Verheij, “Les Frères de Terre et d’Eau: Sur le Rôle des Kurdes dans les Massacres Arméniens de 1894-1896” [Brothers of Earth and Water: On the Role of the Kurds in the Armenian Massacres of 1894-1896], *Les Annales de l’Autre Islam* 5 (1998), 225-276.

<sup>18</sup> BBA, MF.MKT 24/3, 3 Zilhicce 1291, 11 January 1875.

<sup>19</sup> BBA, MF.MKT 21/28, 8 Şevval 1291/18 November 1874; BBA, MF.MKT 28/161, 12 Cemaziyülevvel 1292/16 June 1875.

<sup>20</sup> Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2001), 205.



reform efforts. Between 1869 and 1876, funds for education were cut in half.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, the efforts made towards educational implementation in Eastern Anatolia are yet another testament to the grand vision of peripheral integration that the *tanzimat* administrators had in mind and their determination to implement reform even amid a multitude of shocks and stresses.

### Relations Between the Ottoman Administration and the Locals

Between 1869 and 1878, Ottoman *valis* in Eastern Anatolia varied in their relationships with the locals and their attitudes towards reform. There are also variations in the ways in which they were perceived by different local and foreign actors. Some *valis* were accused of turning a blind eye to atrocities committed by some Kurdish Muslim groups and purposefully allowing disorder to prevail. Burnaby noted in his travelogue to Eastern Anatolia in 1877 that many of the “Pachas,” referring to the *valis* and other men appointed by the Sublime Porte to oversee affairs in Eastern Anatolia, took bribes from conniving Kurdish elites. He wrote that at times when these men were ordered to dispatch troops to put down Kurdish rebellions would “purposefully leave one or two defiles open” to allow the Kurds to escape. In order to save face, they would then send a telegraph back to the Sublime Porte falsely reassuring Istanbul that “perfect order reign[ed] throughout the district under [their] command.”<sup>22</sup>

In 1871, Consul Taylor criticized the *vali* of Erzurum of deliberately ignoring the

---

<sup>21</sup> Bayram Kodaman, *Abdülhamid Devri Eğitim Sistemi* [The Education System During the Abdülhamid Period], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1988), 157.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick Gustavus Burnaby, *On Horseback Through Asia Minor* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1877), 2: 113.

Sublime Porte's orders to arrest and detain Shaykh Ubaydullah, who was accused of committing injustices against Christians:

Notwithstanding repeated order of the Porte for this man's trial and punishment, consequent upon the repeated complaints of the Nestorians, the fanatical feelings of the Vali prevailing over his sense of justice and true policy induced him to give this criminal, who ought long ago to have been consigned to the bagnio for life, a public entry into the town, escorted by public troops and high functionaries. During his stay here the fanatical party, headed by the Vali, treated him more like an inspired being, a man sent from God, than anything else, and on his departure furnished him with such recommendations as induced Aali Pasha, in the face of his previous order for Obeyd Ullah's arrest and trial, to declare his innocence of all the atrocious crimes he or his people, through his instigation and preaching, most undoubtedly committed.<sup>23</sup>

In some instances, the Porte did try to extricate corrupt and venal *valis*. In February 1869, the Porte ordered the removal of Abdullah Paşa from Van on charges of misconduct, embezzlement, and venality, and replaced him with the *mutasarrıf* of Kars.<sup>24</sup>

Other *valis* were more committed to a vision of reform and were more willing to use heavy-handed tactics against dissenting locals. Kurt İsmail Hakkı Paşa, a Kurd from Kars, was an ardent supporter of the idea to reform Eastern Anatolia. As an administrator in Çıldır, Muş, Van, Hakkari, Dersim, Siirt between 1845 and 1856, he routinely attempted to facilitate reform in the region by limiting the movement of seminomadic tribes through direct settlement and state supervision. In 1856, he was sent to Diyarbakır to help the military settle tribes. In 1865, was appointed as a commander in the *Fırka-yı Islahiye* (The Reform Division), a bureaucratic division created in 1865 that played both administrative and military roles in putting down rebel activity and settling the tribes in

---

<sup>23</sup> Consul Taylor, cited in Humphrey Sandwith, "How the Turks Rule Armenia," *The Nineteenth Century, A Monthly Review* 3 (January-June 1878): 324.

<sup>24</sup> BBA, İ.ŞD 12/562, 18 Şevval 1285/1 February 1869.

the regions of Kozan, Gavurdağı, Zeytun, Kürtdağı, Akçadağ, and Dersim.<sup>25</sup> Inspired by the his experiences in the *Fırka-yı Islahiye*, Kurt İsmail Paşa asked the Sublime Porte to be sent back to Diyarbakır where he hoped to bring together a joint military-administrative effort to settle the tribes in the *vilayet*, balance power between groups in the region, and help integrate non-Muslim groups in the region. He was appointed in 1868 and remained there until 1875.<sup>26</sup>

Kurt İsmail Paşa founded Diyarbakır's first newspaper, *Diyarbakır Gazetesi*, which was published in Turkish in both Ottoman and Armenian script. He helped make improvements to the legal and education systems in Diyarbakır, establishing a court of appeals and a department of education. He helped develop the bureaucracy and infrastructure by establishing the municipality of Diyarbakır, a provincial council, a public works department, and a telegraph department. Moreover, he attempted to improve security, which had been in a dire condition, by organizing a gendarme regiment. He received praise from the British, Ottomans, and locals for his commitment to improving the overall situation in the city and the *vilayet*.<sup>27</sup>

Hasan Paşa, the *vali* of Van during the 1870s, also appeared committed to implementing reform and reducing the power of Kurdish tribal groups. Yeremia

---

<sup>25</sup> For more information on the *Fırka-yı Islahiye* see Nuri Yavuz, "Fırka-ı Islahiye Ordusunun Özellikleri ve Faaliyetleri" [The Features and Activities of the Fırka-ı Islahiye (The Division of Renovation)] *Akademik Bakış* 5, no. 10 (Summer 2012): 113-27.

<sup>26</sup> Oktay Karaman, "Diyarbakır Valisi Hatunoğlu Kurt İsmail Hakkı Paşa'nın Diyarbakır'daki Aşiretleri İslah ve İskân Çalışması (1868-1875)" [Diyarbakır Vali Hatunoğlu Kurt İsmail Hakkı Paşa's Attempt to Reform and Settle the Tribes of Diyarbakır (1868-1875)], *International Journal of History* 4, no. 2 (April 2012): 229-231.

<sup>27</sup> Suavi Aydın and Jelle Verheij, "Confusion in the Cauldron: Some Notes on Ethno-Religious Groups, Local Powers, and the Ottoman State in Diyarbekir Province, 1800-1870," *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870-1915*, ed. Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 43-44.

Devgants, an emissary of Patriarch Migirdich sent in 1872 to survey the abuses committed against Armenians in the region, praised Hasan Paşa for his attempts to control tribes and bring justice to the attackers of Armenians. In his travelogue of his journey to the Van region and ‘Upper Armenia,’<sup>28</sup> he mentions an occasion when Hasan Paşa went out to meet the Kurdish marauders as they were raiding villages on their way to Van. Upon meeting Shaykh Jelaluddin, Hasan Paşa went to kiss his hand. However, Jelaluddin reviled Hasan Paşa and did not even give him his face since he believed him to be an “Armenian-lover and a *gavur*.”<sup>29</sup> Hormuzd Rassam, an ethnic Assyrian in the service of the British government who journeyed through Eastern Anatolia in 1877, also praised Hasan Paşa as well as Abdurrahman Paşa, then *vali* of Diyarbakır:

Both Abd-ar-Rahman Pasha, the government-general of Diarbekir, and Hasan Pasha, the governor-general of Wan, were trying all they could to remedy the evil [of atrocities committed by some Kurdish Muslim groups]; but with the staff they had at their command, and for want of funds, it was impossible for them to establish the required reform or enforce order in the disturbed districts.<sup>30</sup>

Burnaby confirms the weak position of many Ottoman administrators in their efforts to combat the repeated outrages committed by marauders throughout the region. He remarks that an Armenian, who gave him information about the crimes that mountain-dwelling seminomadic groups, said that “he liked the Pacha at Van,” (referring to the *vali*) but noted that the he “was powerless to prevent these attacks.” Burnaby’s Armenian contact went on to estimate that there were five thousand well-armed Kurdish marauders

---

<sup>28</sup> Devgants calls the region north of Lake Van *Bardzr Hayk*, meaning Upper Armenia. Yeremia Devgants, *Chanaparhordutyun Bardzr Hayk yev Vaspurakanin 1872-1873 tt.* [Journey to Upper Armenia and Van 1872-1873] (Yerevan: Hayastani GA Hratarakchutyun, 1991).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 13-14, 106.

<sup>30</sup> Hormuzd Rassam and Robert William Rogers, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod* (Cincinnati: Curts and Jennings, 1897), 89.

taking refuge in the mountains and across the Ottoman border in Iran who were capable of outmaneuvering any government force. “Artillery could not be transported in those regions,” claimed the contact. He added, “the troops at the disposal of the Government were too few to be of any real assistance.”<sup>31</sup>

The fact of the matter was that there was tremendous pressure upon the Ottoman administration of Eastern Anatolia from multiple sides. The Sublime Porte pressured administrators to make centralization a priority, which risked alienating Kurdish groups. Many of the Kurdish elites pressured administrators through bribes, pleas, passive aggression, and threats of violence to allow them free reign of the region. Finally, Britain and some Armenian groups (usually political liberals who supported the cause of the peasantry) pressured administrators to prosecute violators of the law, undertake political reform, and protect the Armenians. Even with delicate political maneuvering, administrators could hardly avoid offending one group or another.

### Continued Power Struggles

The removal of the major Kurdish *beys* from Eastern Anatolia by 1850 created a power vacuum that the Ottoman state was able only partially to fill. Between the 1850s and 1870s, an increasing number of smaller Kurdish elites competed with each other for power and resources. For most of this period, the Ottomans focused on containing the spread of rebellion against the state, but it generally lacked adequate administrative and military capacity to implement controls and security to protect the local populace. The administrative, political, and military initiatives that the Ottoman state undertook between

---

<sup>31</sup> Burnaby, *On Horseback Through Asia Minor*, 2: 248-249.

1864 and 1871 did show signs of improvement. However, the political and fiscal crises in Istanbul during the 1870s stalled the momentum of these initiatives. Consequently, the competition between Kurdish groups for control over land and resources continued almost unabated. Since no single Kurdish group was capable of dominating the other through direct combat, they sought a more indirect method of undermining their rivals' power by attacking their economic base. Economic losses triggered others to engage in more theft and ravage. Hormuzd Rassam describes this vicious cycle in his travelogue:

In the lowlands, especially in the plains of Bitlis and Moosh, the Christians complained of the constant arbitrary demands of their Mohammedan neighbors, who were continually exacting whatever they chose; and if their orders were not complied with, they would either punish the poor people by incendiary or night robbery, or set the Koordish brigands to attack them. On asking the Mohammedan villagers about these complaints, they did not deny the reported misdeeds, but said, as they were tyrannized over by other more powerful tribes, they considered it right that they should in turn recoup themselves from those who were beneath them. Some went so far to say that, as the Turkish authorities oppressed them, they were obliged to turn to their neighbors for contribution.<sup>32</sup>

A letter from Garegin Srvantsiants, a politically active cleric, reveals another instance of Armenians caught in the crossfire between competing Kurdish groups. He notes that while traveling through the village of Kvars in the Çabakçur *sancak*, the local Armenians complained of being “oppressed by both the Boğulna Kurds and Abdal Ağa,” whose nearly annual skirmishes imposed a significant burden on them. However, since the local Armenians were armed and organized, they were able to fend off some of the advances of the Kurds.<sup>33</sup>

The peasantry, both Muslim and Christian, bore the brunt of these power struggles. They were sedentary and lacked the weaponry, social organization, and

---

<sup>32</sup> Rassam and Rogers, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod*, 89.

<sup>33</sup> Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyun*, 61.

administrative knowledge to defend themselves adequately. Many tribal groups appeared to be in an effort to restore the power, prestige, and wealth of the earlier *beyliks*. They often tried to turn the lands that they occupied into *tapu* (land that was officially registered in their names). Yeremia Devgants, an Armenian who was commissioned by the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul to conduct a survey of Armenian society in Eastern Anatolia during the early 1870s, notes that many of the Kurds around Nakhchevan, “Jelal<sup>34</sup> and other Kurds...appropriated large tracts of land and soil from the poor villagers and made it *tapu*.”<sup>35</sup> In other cases, Kurdish *beys* managed to control land without officially registering it as *tapu* land. Such was the case with Abdal Ağa of Çabakçur, who in 1868 “was the lord of much land without having made it *tapu*.”<sup>36</sup>

To make matters even more difficult for the peasantry, many armed seminomadic Kurdish groups also resorted to extorting high taxes from them. The aforementioned Abdal Bey of Çabakçur would take half of the crops that villagers produced and randomly take whatever he pleased from the Armenians. He would do the same to travelers passing through land under his control.<sup>37</sup>

The Ottoman state added to the woes of the peasantry. In order to offset the economic crisis of the 1870s, state administrators made great strides to collect back taxes from many *de facto* exempt areas. For instance, in 1875, the Ottomans demanded that the Heriki tribe and Nestorian Christians make payments on thirty years of arrears in taxes

---

<sup>34</sup> By Jelal, Devgants is referring to Jelaledin, a Kurdish brigand from the Müküs region who preached a reactionary form of Islam and was notorious for extorting peasants and terrorizing Christians.

<sup>35</sup> Devgants, *Chanaparhordutyun*, 106.

<sup>36</sup> H.M. Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyune* [The History of Sasun] (Yerevan: Hayastan Hratarakchutyun, 1985), 61.

<sup>37</sup> Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyune*, 61.

and relinquish their monopolistic control over the tobacco industry in southeastern Anatolia.<sup>38</sup>

Many Armenian peasants were forced to labor for free and became *de facto* slaves, who were bought and sold.<sup>39</sup> An 1869 petition (*takrir*) signed by several Armenians and submitted to the Istanbul patriarchate succinctly sums up many of the atrocities to which Armenian peasants were subjected:

A violent group attacked the village of Shadakh [Çatak], after imposing a fine of five hundred, four hundred, and then three hundred *kuruş*. They also steal flocks of sheep and run. The local Kurds come later and pillage, but the marauders abduct them.<sup>40</sup>

A noteworthy aspect of this particular petition is how local Kurdish groups were both perpetrators of atrocities against Christians, and the victims of more powerful tribes who sought to overrun them.

The security situation was particularly dire near the border, where competition for land and resources between Kurdish groups was especially fierce. The poor circumstances forced many Eastern Anatolian Armenians to migrate to Russia in search of relief. Over the course of the 1850s and 1860s, Armenians left the town of Beyazıt,

---

<sup>38</sup> Telegraph from the Van *mutasarrıflık*, BBA, A.MKT.MHM 480/66, 16 Eylül 1291/28 September 1875, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Yeremia Devgants notes that this was the case in Müküs when he visited in 1872. Devgants, *Chanaparhordutyun*, 228. Hormuzd Rassam also notes rampant serfdom and slavery throughout Eastern Anatolia at the time, and that both Christians and Muslims were held as slaves: “I was surprised to find that the state of serfdom in [the *vilayets* of Diyarbakır and Van] had never been quite abolished, but, on the contrary, in some of the inaccessible mountain fastnesses, Christian villages with their inhabitants had been recently bartered for, and sold by their Beys and Aghas as if they were their own slaves. Any man who dared to change his habitation to another village while he was held in a kind of bondage, was sure to meet with his death. I was told by some Koordish chiefs that this old feudal law was submitted to, *even by Moslems of the lower class*” (emphasis added). Rassam, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod*, 89.

<sup>40</sup> Devgants, *Chanaparhordutyun*, 178-179.



where they once had a much larger presence.<sup>41</sup> Political corruption was another reason that Armenians contemplated migration. Devgants notes that “some of the villagers thought of migrating to Russia because of the seizures [of land], and because the...*bey*s of the *vilayet* were members of the assemblies and did everything according to their own whims.” He added quite aptly:

Thus, the Armenians had no legal power to [challenge them] nor the time to protest, when poverty’s end dominates them, they...start to protest, but vainly. And thus the Armenians are stripped of their rights, first through ignorance, then through carelessness.<sup>42</sup>

The Ottoman government was not keen on the departure of cultivators from the region. They viewed them as beneficial to not only the economy, but also to the balance of power. Their presence in the rural regions kept the land tilled and productive, and it also kept Kurdish tribes divided. When Armenian peasants emigrated, it opened up space for Kurdish groups to occupy more land and thus increase the ratio of Muslims to Christians in the region. In some cases, it increased the possibility of land disputes between Kurdish groups. In response to reports of Armenian emigration from Pasin, located about twenty-five miles east of Erzurum, the *vali* of Erzurum, Samih Paşa, commissioned the *kaymakam* of Pasin to visit the villages from where the Armenians were beginning to migrate. His task was to convince them to stay in their villages and have them sign a pledge of loyalty to the sultan. They were also to pledge that “they would never desire to depart the glorious Ottoman Empire.” However, many refused and migrated.<sup>43</sup>

Ottoman documents reveal numerous attempts to endear Christians to the

---

<sup>41</sup> *Missionary Herald* 69 (1873), 21.

<sup>42</sup> Devgants, *Chanaparhordutyun*, 124.

<sup>43</sup> Celile Celil, *Intifadat al-Akrad ‘Am 1880* [Uprising of the Kurds 1880] (Moscow: Academy of Sciences in the Soviet Union, 1966), 27.

government's reform efforts and increase security. There are cases of the Ottoman state attempting to intervene to help Christians against their attackers. In August 1869, the Sublime Porte granted Hosep Efendi, a monk who was in charge of *millet* affairs in the Van region, a *nişan* or medal of honor for his "service and loyalty" to the state.<sup>44</sup> In 1869, the Ottoman state attempted to implement some political reforms for the Nestorian Christians around Hakkari, promising them greater political privileges and legal protections.<sup>45</sup> Reports from Muş in 1868 recorded that tribes were brought under control and agitations against Christians in the area were stemmed.<sup>46</sup> The archives are replete with similar reports throughout the 1860s and 1870s, but they give little information as to the effectiveness of the actions taken, and it is more than likely that some administrators in Eastern Anatolia embellished reports about the state of security. The myriad reports written by Western observers and Armenians that detail patterns of harassment, theft, pillage, plunder, rape, abduction, assaults, and murder serve as evidence that Ottoman authorities were generally doing too little to ensure security. On a visit to Muş in 1869 Consul Taylor reported that the state of security and the economy had deteriorated greatly from when he visited the town six years before: "[In 1863,] the villages seemed well peopled, and the crops, though damaged by locusts, in far greater variety and profusion than [in 1869]."<sup>47</sup>

Muslim victims of oppressive tactics generally lacked the means and knowledge

---

<sup>44</sup> BBA, İ.HR 240/14216, 10 Cemaziyülevvel 1286/18 August 1869.

<sup>45</sup> BBA, İ.DH 599/41779, 28 Cemaziyülevvel 1286/5 September 1869.

<sup>46</sup> BBA, İ.ŞD 12/567, 22 Şevval 1285/26 January 1869.

<sup>47</sup> Consul J.G. Taylor to the Earl of Clarendon, Erzurum, March 19, 1869, Inclosure in No. 25, (*Turkey no. 16* (77), p. 16-36, no. 13/1), cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 55.

to seek restitution through official channels. Instead of seeking recourse through the Ottoman courts or the Great Powers, they looked to local *ağas*, *beys*, and *shaykhs* for protection. Before the 1850s, *beys*, such as Bedr Khan Bey, played a crucial role as a protective force against disorder. Since the scope of their power extended over large areas, they were able to moderate intertribal disputes and balance power against government control. However, after the 1850s, smaller *beys* lacked the power to provide long-lasting stability and invested much of their time and resources in power struggles against other small *beys*. *Shaykhs* came to play an important role as mediators between tribes, especially after the fall of large *beyliks*. Shaykh Ubaydullah, for instance, commanded the allegiance of dozens of different competing tribes in the regions of Hakkari and Van, as well as in Iran, and helped to resolve conflicts and disputes between them.<sup>48</sup>

### Seeking Recourse

Between 1800 and 1850, the Armenian peasantry had little recourse against either local or state abuses of power, and their grievances fell on few supportive ears either in the Armenian community or in the Ottoman state apparatus. The Armenian elites in Istanbul either knew little of their plight or believed that there were more pressing matters to attend to within the Armenian community, and that by attending to those matters that the problems of the peasantry would be lightened. In addition, many Armenian elites turned a blind eye to the condition of the peasantry, not wanting to endanger the status quo. Some Armenian clerics during this time were sympathetic to the peasants' plight;

---

<sup>48</sup> Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, 76-78; Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh, and State*, 248-252.

however, they were largely apolitical and sought to give them solace through religious ritual. While a few clerics, such as Nerses Ashtaraketsi, did undertake political action for the cause of the peasantry, influential actors in the Ottoman Armenian community worked hard to curb his influence during this period.

Missionary activity, the cultural flowering of the Armenian community in the western Ottoman Empire, and the expansion of education among the Armenians between 1830 and 1860 were all factors that contributed to expanding the political consciousness of Eastern Anatolian Armenians and altering the mood of the general Armenian community more towards political liberalization. The Armenian cleric Migirdich Khrimian was particularly instrumental in shifting the attention of both the larger Armenian community and the international community to Eastern Anatolian Armenians. Born in Van in 1820, Khrimian grew up in an environment plagued by frequent political and social tumult. He witnessed the struggles between local elites for power over the city, the anti-*tanzimat* riots of the 1840s, the decline of the Armenian elite, and growing friction between Kurds and Armenians. Since his father died while he was young, his uncle funded his education at the Varag monastery near the city of Van where he studied literature, history, and classical Armenian.<sup>49</sup>

His passion for learning and education led him to move to Istanbul in 1847 where he became a teacher. While there, the blossoming literati culture in the Armenian community helped shape his thoughts and ideas. Within this culture were persistent calls for the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire to learn and master the Armenian language

---

<sup>49</sup> Agop J. Hacikyan, Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, and Nourhan Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 3: 236-238.

(many Armenians in the western Ottoman Empire did not speak Armenian), become proficient in the sciences, and come together because of their shared ethnicity. The emerging trend within this culture was one of political liberalism with secularist leanings. Ethnic greatness took precedence over religious greatness. Religious and class divisions within the Armenian community were to be overcome. The various advocates of cultural change in Istanbul at the time did not, however, call for political autonomy. They tended to stress the idea of transformation *within* the traditional Ottoman *millet* structure.<sup>50</sup>

Khrimian was impressed by the politically liberal ideas from the West that were permeating the Armenian middle class. He too desired to be active in bringing about transformation within the Armenian community and through the channels of the Ottoman state (rather than in opposition to it, as had been the trend pursued by many in the Greek and Serbian communities of the Ottoman Empire), albeit much more inclusive of the Eastern Anatolian peasantry. After visiting Jerusalem, Cilicia, and Van between 1850 and 1853 and serving as *vartabed* at Aghtamar on Lake Van for a year in 1854, he returned to Istanbul in 1855, where he began publishing *Ardzvi Vaspurakani* (The Eagle of Van), a periodical that dedicated to a message of liberal reform, national unity, and sympathy for the plight of the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia. He returned to Van in 1856 to serve as Prior of the Varag monastery and transferred the central location of publication and distribution of *Ardzvi Vaspurakani* to Van in 1858. The periodical continued until 1864.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Libaridian, "The Ideology of the Armenian Liberation," 107-108.

<sup>51</sup> For a brief timeline of Khrimian's life, see Armenian Apostolic Church of America, *Hayrig: A Celebration of His Life and Vision on the Eightieth Anniversary of His Death, 1907-1987* (New York: Prelacy of the Armenian Church, 1987), 17.

In *Ardzvi Vaspurakan*, Khrimian and other liberal writers advanced the idea of the nation as a timeless entity that needed to be restored. For Khrimian, the Armenians' sense of national unity and solidarity had deep roots, dating back to their adoption of Christianity in the 300s. Although this sense continued to exist among the Armenians in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, it had become dormant. The collective Armenian conscience needed to be reawakened not just through a cultural revival, which had been taking place among the elite and middle class Armenians living in the Western Ottoman Empire, but through social reform.

Khrimian had a penchant for writing. He composed elaborate stories and poems through many of which he conveyed his sorrow for what had become of the Armenian nation and constructed a social vision for change and transformation. He was careful in his writing to not direct overt and sharp criticism toward state authorities and Armenian *millet* authorities. Yet, a subtle, but powerful, discontent for them is strongly embedded in his narrative. For instance, in a fictional dialogue between an urban Armenian elite and peasant, the peasant reacts to the pomp of urban elite by saying, “your laws are like traps in which the poor and the weak peasants are caught. You suck our bloods like spiders through bribery, restrictive measures, prohibitions, and other forms of injustice.”<sup>52</sup>

In 1862, Khrimian was appointed to the position of Prelate of Muş. While there, he continued his pattern of advocacy by publishing the periodical *Ardzvi Darono* (The Eagle of Daron/Muş). While the periodical was similar to *Ardzvi Vaspurakan* in its

---

<sup>52</sup> *Ardzvi Vaspurakani* 10 (1862): 289-308, cited in Liberadian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 59-60.

design, content, and message, it was arguably much more overt in its political advocacy. The periodical elicited an angry response from many of the Armenian elites, many of whom petitioned the Armenian patriarch to close down its publication. In a letter to the Armenian patriarch in 1863, several Armenian elites in Istanbul accused Khrimian of trying to incite a riot against the Ottoman government:

The *Ardzvi* is trying to make the case that the Armenians are prisoners in the hands of the Kurds and other oppressors among them and over them. It draws attention to the nation-hating (*azgatyats*) and treacherous Armenians from whom the rest of the Armenian nation supposedly needs to be freed.<sup>53</sup>

Khrimian continuously championed the cause of the Armenian peasantry in Eastern Anatolia. During the early 1860s, he unsuccessfully advocated change to the Armenian constitution so that the peasantry in Eastern Anatolia would be more proportionally represented in the Armenian National Assembly.<sup>54</sup> In the same period, Khrimian traveled throughout the regions of Van and Muş listening to the stories of the unfortunate, downtrodden masses of Armenians and gathering reports of complaint (*takrir*), which detailed all of the abuses committed by Kurdish groups and Ottoman officials. He encouraged clerics to gather lists of grievances to submit to both Armenian authorities in the *millet* as well as Ottoman authorities. During his travels, Khrimian tried to convince Kurdish groups to align their interests with his. While some agreed, Kurdish religious figures, who were filling the power vacuum left after the Ottomans toppled the major *beys* in the 1840s, were generally resistant to his ideas of a union.<sup>55</sup>

By the late 1860s, Khrimian had gained a tremendous amount of support and

---

<sup>53</sup> Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyun*, 63-64.

<sup>54</sup> Libaridian, *Modern Armenia*, 58-63.

<sup>55</sup> Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyun*, 61.

popularity among the Armenian community. A sufficient number of largely middle class Armenians in the National Assembly had become enamored of his message to elect him Patriarch of Constantinople in 1869, which he reluctantly accepted. His election was nothing short of controversial, both in the Armenian community and in the Ottoman state. The lingering Armenian elite, who although small in number had substantial political and social influence, resented Khrimian's thrust. The Sublime Porte, keen on maintaining the status quo, acquiesced in Khrimian's election, fearing strong reaction from British and Russian officials and possible rebellion in the Armenian community if they attempted to bar his assumption of power.<sup>56</sup>

As Patriarch, Khrimian continued to do as he had previously done, pushing reform through the proper channels. His method had the support of much of the politically active Armenian community, which set it apart from many elements within the Serbian and Greek communities, who had pursued a path of separatism. Khrimian was careful not to appear to challenge the sovereignty of the Ottoman state. He promoted the idea of a state within a state, much like the traditional *millet* system, except with a more diverse power distribution among the Armenians and with greater protection on the part of the state. He preached a strong message of populism, promoting the idea that the goals of the people who governed Armenian society within the Ottoman state should align with the needs and interests of the larger Armenian population. In his inaugural speech as patriarch, Khrimian said, "for me the interests of the state and the nation are the same."<sup>57</sup> Khrimian was a strong supporter of the Armenian Constitution and sought to use it as a

---

<sup>56</sup> Libaridian, "The Ideology of the Armenian Liberation," 116.

<sup>57</sup> *Atenagrutiunk Azgayin Zhoghovo* [Minutes of the National Assembly] (Istanbul: 1870-1914), November 12, 1869, 414, cited in *ibid.*, 292, fn. 41.



tool of political liberalization from the hold of the traditional Armenian elite on power. His opponents had long been inveighing against his attempt to use the constitution to forward his political aims. In 1863, political rivals wrote letters of protest to the government in which they claimed that beneath his rhetorical appeal to constitutionalism he fostered “a secret aim to provoke the Armenians, to preach against government power, and to cause the people to rebel.”<sup>58</sup> The mood of many of the elites toward him in 1869 was similar.

One of the first items on Khrimian’s agenda as patriarch was to compile a list of grievances submitted by Armenians throughout the Empire against abuses committed by government officials and local Muslim groups and individuals, and submit them first to the Armenian National Assembly for review and approval, and then to the Sublime Porte as a petition for drastic security and policy reform. This list was based on 529 *takrirs* (letters of petition or complaint) that had been compiled by Armenian ecclesiastics and other Armenian authorities in all areas inhabited by Armenians between March 14, 1849 and March 21, 1869. The petition contained four categories of complaints. The first category was a list of tax abuses committed by Ottoman officials (many of whom were local Kurds with strong ties to dominant local tribes). The Armenian Patriarch had received complaints that taxes were being imposed on the dead and that military exemption taxes were being imposed on those who were too young or too old for military service. Villagers commonly complained of officials backing nonofficial local Kurdish tribes in tax collection, often at extortionate rates. Tax collectors often extorted villagers of their resources by assessing lands based on perceived potential production rather than

---

<sup>58</sup> Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyun*, 63.

actual production. Furthermore, Armenians were forced to give some of their produce to a general stock kept at a warehouse, which was intended for the use of peasants affected by poor harvests. However, in the ten years that it functioned, hardly any Armenians in need actually benefitted from the stock. Assessors often deliberately overvalued the lands of non-Muslims, and cultivators were forced to pay according to these over-assessments. For instance one piece of land that was registered by the *kassam* at a value of 59,090 kuruş was estimated by assessors to be worth 527,942 kuruş, nearly nine times the original stated amount. High interest rates on loans forced many peasants to default, and as a result officials and local ringleaders justified confiscating their lands. Some were forced to pay taxes for years of exemption in the past and were forced to sell property to pay. Officials would sometimes make arbitrary demands and assessments.<sup>59</sup>

The second category of complaints concerned abuses of power by government officials. Plaintiffs claimed that officials commonly kept Armenians from being able to bury their dead. They forced the peasantry into corvée labor for little pay. *Zaptiyes* extorted money from the peasantry and would secretly enter houses and churches and steal their valuables. Convicts were appointed to positions of power and Armenians were routinely excluded from town councils. The town councils would support actions to convert women and children to Islam by force, local notables controlled who was selected to be on the municipal councils, and *kadis* would deprive the rightful heirs of their inheritance. The Armenian Patriarch believed that since the livelihood and career advancement of most members of councils were dependent on their ties to these notables, the notables operated a sort of shadow government that showed the semblance of fairness

---

<sup>59</sup> Armenian National Assembly, *Rapport sur l'Oppression des Arméniens*, 5-8.

in decision-making, but was in reality an elite-dominated form of oppression.<sup>60</sup>

The third category of complaints was in regard to the administration of justice. No Christian witnesses were allowed to testify in court for cases involving Christian victims of Muslim perpetrators, which allowed perpetrators of all sorts of crimes to go unpunished. Victims of oppression and abuse often declined to give the names of those who had perpetrated crimes against them, fearing reprisals that would be even worse than the abuses.<sup>61</sup>

The fourth category of complaint was concerning the overall lack of effective and efficient channels to administer justice. The bishops and the councils were limited in their ability to address injustices. The National Assembly could only submit complaints to the Patriarch, and the Patriarch could then submit them to the Sublime Porte. The Patriarchate and National Assembly lost power after the Sublime Porte instituted the process of *istilam*, or official inquiry, wherein the Sublime Porte would give *valis* orders to attend to the grievances submitted by inhabitants of their *vilayets*. The governor would in turn order the *mutasarrifs* and *kaymakams* of their respective *vilayets* to look into the matters at hand. These lower functionaries would often neglect or downplay the significance of the cases and would force plaintiffs to sign documents of satisfaction, or satisfaction pieces, which would claim that the case had been attended to and the concerns had been resolved. Those who refused to sign were threatened with punishment and even death.<sup>62</sup>

Between the twenty years that Armenian clerics compiled and submitted lists of

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 10-12.

grievances, most *takrirs* came from the *vilayets* of Diyarbakır and Erzurum, one hundred and fifty-eight and one hundred and thirty-six respectively, mostly out of the *sancaks* of Muş, Harput, and Diyarbakır. During this period, eighty-three *takrirs* were submitted from the *vilayet* of Sivas, forty-four *takrirs* from Aleppo, nineteen from Adana, fourteen from Trabzon, thirteen from Syria, one from Aydın, two from Ankara, thirty-eight from Bursa, one from Kastamonu, and nine from Rumelia. These figures show that although the greatest number of incidents occurred in Kurdish-inhabited areas, Armenians faced widespread persecution in the largely Turkish-inhabited regions of Central and Western Anatolia as well.<sup>63</sup>

The report listed a number of suggestions for the Sublime Porte to take in order to remedy the injustices. These included the inclusion of Armenians in the Ottoman armed forces, census and tax reform, the cessation of the collection of arrears, increased checks and balances to guard against power abuses, stricter enforcement of laws, elections of Armenians to local councils, tighter security along the Iranian border, the disarmament of locals, and political reforms within the Armenian National Assembly and church to ensure fair representation of the interests of the Armenian peasantry.<sup>64</sup>

A sizable number of members of the Armenian National Assembly were unsympathetic to the tone of the report and refused to support a motion to submit it to the Sublime Porte, fearing that Ottoman officials would seek to remove them from their positions in retaliation. However, some opposing members agreed to submit a revised report of complaints to the Sublime Porte on the condition that the Assembly should

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 12-15.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 15-19.

refrain from overt criticism of state officials. The revision was finalized and submitted on April 11, 1876. It directed its criticism mostly towards Kurdish groups and some low-ranking state officials in Eastern Anatolia and suggested that the government step up measures to monitor Kurdish activity. However, beleaguered by the political tumult in the Balkans and pressure from the Great Powers at the time, the Sublime Porte ignored the report.

### Abuses of Armenians

Notably absent in both the first and second reports was any overt criticism of leading figures in the Armenian *millet*. However, in numerous letters and writings, Khrimian and his liberal followers were highly critical of the leading figures of the Armenian *millet* including many higher clergy. Yeremia Davgants, a close ally of Khrimian, who surveyed the situation of the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia in the early 1870s, divided the oppressors into two camps, “internal and external.” “The internal oppressors,” he noted, “are from among ourselves.”<sup>65</sup>

Among these internal oppressors was a group of conservative Armenian elements consisting of clerics and *ishkhans*, led by Boghos Melikian, who was elected bishop (*vartabed*) of Van in the 1850s. They maintained close ties to the Ottoman government and local Kurdish groups, and tried to stamp out efforts to liberalize the educational curriculum and to secularize the *millet*. Critics accused Melikian of corruption, asserting that he took bribes from Ottoman officials and Kurdish elites, and other “thieves, bandits, and oppressors” in order to overlook abuses committed against Armenian peasants in the

---

<sup>65</sup> Poghosian, *Sasuni Patmutyun*, 71.

Van region. In an 1869 article in the Ottoman Armenian newspaper *Manzume-yi Efkar*, Yeremia Devgants criticized Melikian as “the godfather of the Kurds” for his strong ties with corrupt Kurdish elites.<sup>66</sup> Armenian *millet* leaders in Istanbul were hesitant to take strong action against Melikian, but eventually responded to pressure from within Van and decided to banish him from Van in 1860 and relocate him to the Erzurum region, where he maintained ties and contacts.<sup>67</sup> Opponents of Melikian, such as Migirdich Khrimian, Yeremia Devgants, Raffi, and other liberal-minded Armenians consisting of students, the literati, the peasantry, and merchants, labeled Eastern Anatolian supporters of Melikian ‘Boghosians’ and called themselves ‘Aboghosians,’ meaning anti-Boghosians.<sup>68</sup> The followers of Melikian maintained a strong foothold in the Van region throughout the 1870s and 1880s, and systematically used physical abuse, even on women and children, to punish dissenters and cow the Armenians in Van into submission. He helped organize the exile of liberal educator Migirdich Portukalian from Van in 1883, and was suspected of involvement in the exile of Khrimian as well. Some Armenians in Van claimed that Melikian was more to blame than the Kurds for injustices committed against poor Armenians in the region.<sup>69</sup> Melikian was not the only corrupt powerful Armenian in Eastern Anatolia. Khrimian records that he encountered others like Melikian while in Muş. Nshikian notes that the primate of Erzurum, Bishop Harutiun, also had strong ties

---

<sup>66</sup> *Manzume-i Efkar*, July 15, 1869.

<sup>67</sup> Poghosian, *Vaspurakani Patmutyunits (1850-1900)* [From the History of Vaspurakan/Van, 1850-1900] (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakch‘ut‘yun, 1988), 157-158.

<sup>68</sup> Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 203; H.M. Poghosian, *Vaspurakani Patmutyunits: (1850-1900)*, 157-164; Libaridian, “Ideology of the Armenian Liberation,” 217-220.

<sup>69</sup> Libaridian, “The Ideology of the Armenian Liberation,” 217-220.

with Kurdish elites and abused his power.<sup>70</sup>

Khachatur Shiroyan, who served as the Catholicos of Aghtamar at various times between the early 1870s and 1896, was another influential member of the clergy in the Van region who was the subject of liberal criticism. Like Melikian, he was a staunch defender of the religious and political traditions of the Armenian Gregorian elites and reportedly resorted to austere measures to stamp out efforts to propagate liberal education. One of the inhabitants of the village of Gevaş describes Shiroyan's efforts against Armenian petitioners for education:

We gathered a number of the leading men of the villages to ask the Catholicos to build a school for our children and bring in educated clerics to teach them. The Catholicos promised to respond to our request the next day. That night, Catholicos Khachatur dragged a coat of arms that he had obtained from the Sublime Porte through the mud and put it on us. In the morning, when we went to him, he blew fire and flames at us and called us criminals and threatened to turn us in to the government.<sup>71</sup>

Yeremia Devgants was particularly critical of Shiroyan. He accused him of murdering Catholicos Bedros<sup>72</sup> in order to usurp his position. Shiroyan managed to persuade the court to acquit him by accusing two local Kurds of committing the murder. As Catholicos of Van, he was reportedly venal and corrupt, taking bribes from wrongdoers (both Armenians and Kurds) to overlook crimes, extorting from Armenian peasants, and awarding himself a large salary (five times what his predecessor had taken). Devgants calls Shiroyan a hypocrite, paying lip service to liberal causes when

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>71</sup> *Ardzvi Vaspurakani* (Fresno), July-August, no. 13, cited in Poghosian, *Vaspurakani Badmutyun*, 176.

<sup>72</sup> Catholicos Bedros was also a strong critic of Khachatur Shiroyan when he was alive. Devgants noted that Bedros repeatedly reprimanded Shiroyan and once remarked, "I ordained a bishop, not a multezim. It is enough that you oppress your poor people more than the Kurds." Devgants, *Chanaparhordutyun*, 178.

convenient, but bolstering a corrupt and oppressive governing system. According to Devgants, Khachadur and another local bishop (Bishop Hagop) falsely protested against the oppressive Kurds of Çatak and Shaykh Jelaledin of Müküs, with whom he actually had good relations.<sup>73</sup> Devgants did take some satisfaction in the idea that Shiroyan had isolated himself:

[Shiroyan] now sits as a jail bird at the patriarchate and continually protests against the oppressors of the people, sometimes he forces his will upon the people, to a much worse degree than foreign oppressors, and with severe inhumanity beleaguers the villagers.<sup>74</sup>

However, to the chagrin of liberal Armenian activists, Shiroyan managed to surround himself with his friends and allies and win the support of Ottoman officials to remain in his position until his death in 1896. He celebrated the birthday of Sultan Abdülhamid II with praise in 1895.<sup>75</sup>

British Consul Taylor puts forth similar criticism of many Armenian elites, blaming the members of the Armenian National Assembly for indifference, “wilful apathy,” and “silence” on injustices.<sup>76</sup>

### Reverberations of Conflict

It had not been since the massacres of Assyrian Christians in Tişari, Aşita, and Tkhuma in the 1840s that the British had given much attention to the Christians in Eastern Anatolia. The Russians had been vigilantly monitoring the situation of the Armenians throughout the 1850s and 1860s, which they hoped to exploit for their own

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 176-179.

<sup>74</sup> Poghosian, *Vaspurakani Patmutyunits*, 174.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 176-177.

<sup>76</sup> Cited in Burnaby, *On Horseback Through Asia Minor*, 2: 363.



political advantage against the Ottomans, but were not in a position to engage in another international conflict with the Empire. The crisis in Lebanon in the early 1860s had occupied British (and French) attention, but they did not appear to be greatly concerned with the Armenians even during the revolts in Van, Zeytun, and Muş between 1862 and 1864. The British appeared content to let Ottoman policy in Eastern Anatolia, as well as in relation to other Christian minorities, stand as it was as long as Russia did not appear to constitute an immediate threat.

However, the crisis in the Balkans in 1875 drew British attention to the conditions of the Christians in the empire and the Ottomans' endeavors to protect them from abuses. In Bosnia, conflict between Christian peasants and state tax collectors arose resulting in a number of deaths on both sides. The British government intervened politically in 1875 urging the Ottomans to make reforms that would provide relief for the Christian peasants. They were satisfied with the Ottomans' proposals to lower taxes and appoint both Christians and Muslims to local decision-making councils. Yet when the rebellion continued, the Sublime Porte sent reinforcements to subdue the opposition, causing thousands of Christians to flee across the border into Austria, Serbia, and Montenegro. This crisis in the Balkans resulted in an increase of petitions for foreign intervention, thus causing negotiators throughout Europe to prepare for international discussion and the possibility of war.<sup>77</sup>

Disenchantment over the foreign policy of Britain in relation to the Ottoman Empire had been growing among many influential British opposition politicians. Gladstone and other Liberal Party members accused the Conservative government of

---

<sup>77</sup> Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2: 158-159.

turning a blind eye to the Ottoman state's alleged apathy and neglect. They considered that propping up the Ottoman Empire to stave off Russian expansion indirectly allowed the sufferings of Christians to continue. An outbreak of conflict in Bulgaria in 1876, which culminated with widespread violence in the Batak region leaving hundreds of Christians and Muslims dead, vindicated the criticism of liberal British politicians toward the Ottomans and their conservative backers.

The Balkan crisis led many officials to inquire more deeply into the state of the Christians in Eastern Anatolia. Consul James Zohrab was instrumental in calling the attention of high-ranking British officials to the dire situation of the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia. He attributed the rampant injustice committed by both government officials and nonstate Kurdish elites to "fanaticism, cruelty, and dishonesty," which he described as "the only incentives to action which move[d] the men who are sent to administer this unhappy country."<sup>78</sup> While he maintained that the administrators at Istanbul did not share the same "fanaticism," they were "indifferent" toward the plight of the Eastern Anatolian peasantry and more concerned about reaping a continuous stream of revenue than helping the socially disadvantaged.<sup>79</sup> He claimed that there was an ongoing crisis of injustice in Eastern Anatolia that warranted the same degree of attention, if not more, than the crises in the Balkans. Based on a letter that he had received from a missionary at Van he wrote: "were the cruelties perpetrated by the Koords known in Europe, the Bulgarian atrocities

---

<sup>78</sup> Consul Zohrab, Erzurum, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, July 19, 1875, *Turkey no. 16 (1877)*, p. 142-143, no. 86, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 75.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

would be thrown into the shade.”<sup>80</sup>

For Zohrab, the state of injustice in which the Armenians lived was more attributable to the political culture of the local Kurdish elites than to the officials appointed by the central government, who struggled to maintain control over the Kurds. He notes in a letter to the Earl of Derby (the Foreign Secretary) an incident that spoke volumes about the knowledge and political logic of many Ottoman officials at the time in dealing with the Kurdish elites. Thus a Catholic Armenian girl from Muş, who had allegedly expressed interest in converting to Islam, was being held at Erzurum. It had become commonplace for local Muslims in Eastern Anatolia to make allegations that Christians intended to convert to Islam in order to 1) pressure particular Christians to adopt Islam, thus forfeiting their protection by the Armenian *millet* and foreign governments and 2) harry Christian families whom they suspected of noncompliance and disloyalty. When Zohrab informed the *vali* of Erzurum of the girl’s desire to return to Muş to rejoin her parents, the *vali* told him that “it was his duty to prevent bloodshed; that the return of the girl to Moosh [*sic*] would probably bring on events which would necessitate a movement of troops, while her murder would be related in all the papers of Europe as an evident proof that the Hatti-Humayoun had not been put in force and remains a dead letter.” The *vali*’s remarks are telling of the pressure that Ottoman officials felt from the British over the question of their adherence to the *tanzimat* reforms and the fact that they were unable to implement any major reforms in the predominantly

---

<sup>80</sup> Consul Zohrab, Erzurum, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, July 22, 1875, *Turkey no. 16 (1877)*, p. 145, no. 87, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 79.

Kurdish-inhabited lands.<sup>81</sup>

In other accounts, Zohrab notes many occasions on which Ottoman officials appeared to fear the consequences of forceful intervention in Kurdish-held territory. In his memoirs of his travels through Eastern Anatolia in 1876, Fred Burnaby tells of a conversation that he had with Consul Zohrab in which he told a story in which a Kurdish robber “attacked a Turkish merchant” near Harput (modern-day Elazığ). The merchant was able to fend off the robber and wound him, whereupon the robber fled and took refuge with a nearby *shaykh*, Miri Mehmed. In pursuit of the bandit, a colonel of the military division of Erzurum invited the *shaykh* for dinner to coax him to deliver the robber into official hands. When he refused, the colonel threatened him with arrest for obstructing justice. However, when higher ranking Ottoman authorities received word of the potential detention of the *shaykh*, they ordered the colonel to release him for fear of inciting locals to riot.<sup>82</sup> Zohrab also claimed that in the case of rebellions and refusals to deliver criminals to state justice, Ottoman officials in the Kurdish regions would dispatch troops to intimidate the Kurds from staging outright rebellion, but would “purposefully leave” an open space for them to escape. They would then send “telegraphs back to Constantinople that perfect order reigns throughout the district under [their] command.”<sup>83</sup>

It is unclear how or if there was any correlation between the crises in the Balkans and violence in Eastern Anatolia, although it is certainly the case that many Muslim refugees from the Balkans (and the Caucasus) were sent to Eastern Anatolia later in the

---

<sup>81</sup> Consul Zohrab, Erzurum, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, July 19, 1875, *Turkey no. 16 (1877)*, p. 143, no. 86/1, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 76-77.

<sup>82</sup> Burnaby, *On Horseback Through Asia Minor*, 2: 109-112.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

nineteenth century. It is difficult to ascertain to what degree Kurdish groups would have had an understanding of international politics and its potential effects on them.

Nonetheless it appears that Kurdish groups were capable of informing themselves of the potential impact of international politics on their immediate environment through a number of conduits. Kurds near the Ottoman border with Russia were able to inform themselves of Russia's stance toward the Ottoman Empire through direct contact with them. These Kurds may not have had direct conversation with the Russians, but could gauge international relations through patterns of interaction. Kurdish elites near the border were often the recipients of gifts and bribes by Russian officials, according to Consul Zohrab in a conversation with Burnaby. In response to Burnaby's question of which side the Kurds would join in the event of a war with Russia, he replied: "They will go with the side which pays them the most money.... many of them are known to be in Russian pay, and presents are continually being sent by the authorities in the Caucasus to the chiefs in [the environs of Erzurum]." <sup>84</sup> When Russia increased its gifts and bribes to Kurdish groups, this was interpreted as a sign that it was giving more serious consideration to an invasion of Eastern Anatolia. Kurdish groups near the border were the first to know of Russia's increased interest in invasion, and the word gradually spread to Kurdish groups more distant from the border.

A telling incident that indicates the Kurdish groups' knowledge, or at least their general sense, of growing tensions between the Ottoman Empire and Russia was the widespread arson that took place in the city of Van in December 1876. Zohrab reported on December 18 that the "town of Van...suffered much from a fire...[which] was the

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

work of an incendiary.” He further stated the “Christians believe[d] [the fire to have been] done by the military for the sake of plunder,” since the Muslims made off “with goods out of the burning shops.” He exculpated the *vali* of Van from blame since he was at the time sick with “typhoid fever.”<sup>85</sup> In a follow-up memo on December 26, Zohrab reported that some eight hundred to one thousand shops were destroyed in the fire, with both troops and “Koords” looting the shops who “carried off the booty to the mountains.”<sup>86</sup> He sent another memo to Derby on the same day reporting that other fires had taken place in a number of other villages throughout Eastern Anatolia not long after the fire at Van.

Nonetheless the fire at Van was particularly significant. Like Erzurum and Diyarbakır, Van was supposed to be more heavily fortified and better protected from banditry, unlike most of the countryside. The economic activity of the relatively large Armenian community in the city was seen as generally beneficial to the local economy, and Armenians and Kurds in the city had relatively good relations. The scale of the arson and plunder is an indication that the act was well-coordinated between the Kurdish groups living in the environs of Van and the military, many of whom were probably Kurds themselves. It is likely that the act was not perpetrated simply to plunder goods and acquire wealth, but also to deal a major blow to the local Armenian community. By burning their property, the Kurds in effect seized the property, since it drove down its value so much as to force the Armenian owners to abandon it altogether and find another

---

<sup>85</sup> Consul Zohrab, Erzurum, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 18 December 1876, *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, Turkey no. 15 (1877)*, no. 3, 3.

<sup>86</sup> Consul Zohrab, Erzurum, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 26 December 1876, *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, Turkey no. 15 (1877)*, no. 9, 7-8.

locale, if not another profession.

The incident at Van in December 1876 was such a significant turning point in Kurdish-Armenian relations that it prompted Khrimian, himself a native of Van, to publish a pamphlet entitled *Vankuyzh* (the catastrophe of Van) in which he laments the mass fire and its effects on the Armenian community. In the pamphlet he openly criticizes the Ottoman government's tolerance of violence against the Armenian people and insinuates that there is hope in salvation through Russia and other foreign powers. "For five whole centuries," he writes, "[the Ottomans] have lived with the Armenians who have become their loyal yoke-bearing ox to till the ground." The Armenian nation, he continues, had "borne the scourges" of the Ottoman Empire and yet remained a subservient and obedient people. Yet he urges the Armenian *ashkharh* (nation) to lift up its head because "spring is near...and the swallow will deliver you from the throes of the Turkish nation and the day of revival has arrived, and you shall see at that time how that pile of ashes will sprout from barrenness and become green, and your prosperity will be greater than it was before."<sup>87</sup> The pamphlet was a precursor to one of his most popular and influential pamphlets entitled *Haykuyzh* (the catastrophe of the Armenians), which he wrote in early 1877. Khrimian published these pamphlets with the help of his Armenian associates in Tiflis since the Ottomans sought to stifle their distribution for fear that they would arouse greater opposition among the Porte's Armenian subjects.

It is significant that Zohrab differentiates between Ottoman appointees who exploited the Armenians and those who tried to prevent exploitation and promote justice. He notes that the *vali* of Van at the time of the fire, Hasan Paşa, was a just figure who

---

<sup>87</sup> Khrimian, *Vankuyzh*.

sought to maintain security for the Armenians in the region in spite of his inability to maintain control over the semiindependent Kurdish militias who comprised many of the troops under his command. In his memoir of his journey to Eastern Anatolia in 1877, Hormuzd Rassam echoes Zohrab's commendation of Hasan Paşa as well as Abdurrahman Paşa, the *vali* of Diyarbakır. He laments that they were unable to undertake a reform overhaul in the region because of "the want of funds."<sup>88</sup>

Zohrab also notes that Samih Paşa, the head of the fourth military division in Erzurum at the time, was open to the possibility of greater Armenian representation in the local politics of Van. One of Samih Paşa's ideas was to appoint an Armenian *muavvin* (high-ranking assistant) who would serve as an assistant to the *vali*, in order to help habituate the local Muslims in the region to a Christian in a position of government authority. He expressed hope that this would pave the way for a potential Christian *vali* of Van who could govern both Muslim and Christian locals effectively with little opposition. According to Zohrab, Samih Paşa "believe[d] a Christian would prove a better administrator for [the Van] province than a Mussulman."<sup>89</sup> Consul Zohrab painted other Ottoman authorities in a more negative light. For instance he characterizes Nazim Bey, an Ottoman official who was dispatched to Van to investigate the fire, as disingenuous, if not deceptive, for claiming that the conflagration in Van was "accidental," that Christians were also active in pillaging properties, and that shops owned by Muslims were also burned in the fire.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Rassam and Rogers, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod*, 89.

<sup>89</sup> Consul Zohrab, Erzurum, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 26 December 1876, *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, Turkey no. 15 (1877)*, no. 11, 9.

<sup>90</sup> Consul Zohrab, Erzurum, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 6 January 1877, *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, Turkey no. 15 (1877)*, no. 47, 28.



It should be noted that the fire at Van occurred a mere five days before the Istanbul conference of 1876-1877 which began with Sultan Abdülhamid II's promulgation of the Ottoman Constitution, which granted equality to Christian subjects. Of course, those responsible for the fire would have been most unlikely to have any foreknowledge of the imminent promulgation of the Constitution. However, the crisis in the Balkans compounded with the accession of Sultan Abdülhamid II and the noticeable increase in the diplomatic presence of the Russians and British, undoubtedly created a new aura that led the Kurds to the belief that harsher tactics against the Armenians would be necessary to preempt them from benefitting from the reforms in the direction of gaining any significant political authority.

Zohrab discerned a pattern of increased violence against Armenians early in early 1877. In late January, Reverend George P. Knapp sent a telegraph to Zohrab informing him that a "panic in [the] Bitlis district" was taking place that resulted in "several murders," the devastation of many villages, and the desertion of lands by Armenians out of fear of Kurdish attacks. He added that the inhabitants of the Bitlis region, both "Mussulman [and] Christian, watch[ed] armed in their barricaded houses." Zohrab believes that what was taking place was a collaboration of several Kurdish tribal elites from Bitlis, Muş, and Mutkan for the purpose of looting and pillaging property in order to intimidate the inhabitants to flee and then to seize the properties. When Zohrab informed Samih Paşa of the incident and requested that he send troops, the latter replied that if he provided soldiers to protect "every town which was [then] menaced by Koords, he would be left without an army to protect the frontier or garrison the fortresses." He urged the

people of each town to provide their own police force.<sup>91</sup>

On March 15, 1877 Zohrab reported that the persecution of Christians at Erzurum had grown to unprecedented levels, which was significant given that Erzurum, like Van, was supposed to be under more thorough-going Ottoman protection. Many of the perpetrators were Ottoman military officers who would reportedly “go to shops, and take goods at their own prices; the least remonstrance on the part of the owners results in abuse and blows; people are beaten, and the Christian religion is openly cursed. This is done in the presence of the soldiers who crowd the streets, and they follow the example.” Similar actions were committed in Gümüşhane in that same year. In late March the British Foreign Secretary ordered all consular officials to immediately submit a detailed report of all abuses committed against Christians throughout the empire.<sup>92</sup>

#### Dersim: A Last Frontier in Eastern Anatolia?

The Dersim region (present-day Tunceli) is worthy of mention because it was one of the last regions in Eastern Anatolia that the Ottomans managed to place under their tenuous central control during the *tanzimat* period. Nestled in the Taurus mountains between Erzincan and Mamuret Ülaziz (modern-day Elazığ), Dersim differed in a number of ways from other Kurdish/Armenian-majority areas. The predominant dialects spoken in Dersim during the nineteenth century were two more or less mutually intelligible dialects called Kirmanjki (not to be confused with Kurmanji) and Zazaki, which, although still considered Kurdish dialects by the locals (as they self-identified as

---

<sup>91</sup> Consul Zohrab to Sir H. Elliot, Erzurum, January 30, 1877, no. 206, *Turkey, no. 15 (1877), Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1877), 146.

<sup>92</sup> Kirakosian, *British Diplomacy and the Armenian Question*, 59.

Kurds), were greatly different from the Kurmanji and Sorani Kurdish dialects spoken further southeast. Furthermore, many of the inhabitants of Dersim were Alevis who did not identify with Sunni Islam.

The rugged terrain of the region provided small groups with natural defenses from outside intervention, which meant that a large number of small tribes and families managed to hold power over various subregions. Power-sharing in Dersim was much like that in Hakkari before the advent of the foreign missionaries (which left an indelible mark on the political consciousness of the Hakkari region's inhabitants). Also since Dersim was not close to the border with Russia and not vulnerable to military penetrations from Iraq or Egypt, the Ottomans did not try to keep power centralized around a single powerful family as they did in Muş and Beyazıt.

The administrative reforms in Dersim began in 1848. In 1851, Ottoman authorities created the Dersim *sancak*, which was placed under the jurisdiction of the Harput *eyalet*, and regularly rotated a number of prominent local elites in and out of the administrative office in the *sancak* in order to prevent any one elite from amassing power and to discipline rebellious behavior.<sup>93</sup> Not long after its creation, the Dersim *sancak* experienced a great deal of instability and unrest. Groups resorted to plunder and murder as a means of gaining power and wealth in an increasingly uncertain environment. The state frequently sent in outside forces to intervene in heated and often bloody disputes between local groups. During the Crimean War the state ratcheted up pressure on Dersim

---

<sup>93</sup> İbrahim Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Dersim Sancağı: İdarî, İktisadî, ve Sosyal Hayat* [The Dersim Sancak During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: Administrative, Economic, and Social Life] (Elazığ: Çağ Ofset Matbaacılık, 1999), 35-36, 46.

to pay dues and provide soldiers, but many resisted. The land had been ravaged because of power struggles that were a significant cause of a famine in 1855.<sup>94</sup>

After the Crimean War the state stepped up its efforts once again to rid the region of brigands and rebels and bring it under more central control. The state's efforts were popular among many disempowered groups who were the targets of local bandits. In 1857 a group of people from the region sent a letter of thanks to Ismail Paşa, the *vali* of Harput, for his efforts in protecting them from the excesses of the Koçgiri tribe. The letter was likely an attempt to woo officials to appoint one of them to a position of power rather than an expression of solidarity with the Ottoman state's political vision.<sup>95</sup> Yet despite state efforts to rein in unrest, social conditions remained bleak.

The driving force behind the state's political venture into Dersim was partly the need to increase its revenue and number of military recruits, but also to stem the rise of political elites and movements. The growth of Bedr Khan's influence during the 1840s had shown the state that the Kurds were indeed capable of mobilizing a formidable force against it. With Russia eagerly seeking opportunities to embolden local opposition against the Ottoman state, the sultan did not want to take chances.

During the 1850s and 1860s it became increasingly apparent that the state's ineffective efforts to implement its administrative apparatus in the region were insufficient to stem the rise of powerful elites. In 1863 a number of local religious and lay Kurdish elites, foremost among them being Şah Hüseyin, Gulabî, Mansur, and Shaykh Süleyman, gained increasing power, influence, and wealth. Şah Hüseyin, the

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>95</sup> BBA, İD 24942, 14 Recep 1273/13 March 1857, cited in *ibid.*, 73.

*müdiir* of the influential Koçgiri tribe<sup>96</sup> controlled 366 villages by 1863.<sup>97</sup> He and other elites would often acquire land through unlawful seizure and flout official orders to desist from abusing their power. The state would often respond to their defiance by exiling them to other parts of the empire. Thus Şah Hüseyin was exiled to Vidin in Bulgaria in 1863, and others were exiled to places such as Yemen, Basra, and Sinop.<sup>98</sup>

The exile of elites was a risky activity. Elites often commanded a certain degree of legitimacy from the locals that state officials were hard pressed to gain for themselves. Also they were often militarily strong enough to maintain political order, even if it was usually through brutal and unjust means. By removing the elites, the state created power vacuums that multiple competing forces tried to fill. For instance in 1860 a land dispute emerged between the Şeyh Hasanlı tribe and the Pilevenk tribe who sought claim over Sağman. Both sides resorted to violence, theft, and property destruction to try to force the other side to relent. Another land dispute arose in 1862 between an alliance between the Suroğlu and Bahtiyar tribes and the Kabeşoğlu tribe over rights to land use in the Kemah region. The state dispatched forces to try to resolve the conflict, but it was only a modest effort that ended up having little effect.<sup>99</sup> The Ottomans would usually end up allowing elites to return from exile to help reconstruct the social order.

Shaykh Süleyman, one of the leading religious figures of the region, remained a perpetual menace for the Ottoman state. By the 1860s he is said to have enjoyed the allegiance of some five thousand individuals. Ali Bey, the grandson of Hüseyin Bey,

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>97</sup> Ali Kaya, *Başlangıcından Tarihimize Dersim Tarihi* [The History of Dersim from the Beginning to Our Day] (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 1999), 186.

<sup>98</sup> Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Dersim Sancağı*, 74.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 74-75.

acting as tax collector for the Dersim district, faced significant difficulty in persuading those loyal to Shaykh Süleyman to pay full taxes to the Ottoman state and to comply with the conventional laws of conscription.<sup>100</sup> The mounting tension between the Kurds and the Ottoman state is illustrated further by the fact that the *shaykhs* of Dersim refused to negotiate. When the sultan ordered Ahmet Muhtar Pasha to hold talks with the leading *shaykhs* and *beys* in Dersim to try to persuade them to give their allegiance to the Ottoman state, only Hüseyin Bey, the son of the aforementioned Ali Bey, and Gülâbi Bey, the *kaymakam* of Mazgirt, participated. Notably absent were Shaykh Süleyman and Mansur Ağa, another powerful figure in the Dersim region. Gülâbi Bey's participation was not met well by the *shaykh* class, who ambushed and killed him on his return.<sup>101</sup>

During the 1870s the Russians, hoping to sway the inhabitants of Dersim to its side because of its strategic location near Erzurum, sought Shaykh Süleyman as an ally.<sup>102</sup> Sultan Abdulaziz commissioned Samih Pasha to go to Dersim in 1875 to entice the Kurdish leaders to side with the Ottomans against Russia. Having infiltrated tribal politics more than the Ottoman state expected, the religious class remained obdurate in its resistance to the Ottoman state. Shaykh Süleyman managed to accumulate a large number of weapons from the Russians and to mobilize a formidable force of 12,000 soldiers, comprising the militias of numerous tribes, against the Ottoman forces. Despite his resistance to the Ottoman state, he was eventually routed and exiled.<sup>103</sup> Ottoman attempts to take control of Dersim and Russian victories in Kars and Beyazid during the war gave

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>102</sup> See General Avreyanov's correspondence with the Czar, cited in Celil, *Intifadat al-akrad 'am 1880*, 33.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

the Dersimi tribes impetus to engage Ottoman forces once again in the summer of 1877. The Fourth Ottoman brigade entered a number of villages in the Toshik mountains to drive out rebels, but local religious elites called upon Armenian and Kurdish groups to take up arms and fend off the 'Turkish invasion'.<sup>104</sup>

### The Russo-Turkish War 1877-1878

Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire on April 24, 1877. The idea of another invasion of Ottoman territory through the Balkans and Eastern Anatolia gained force with the crises in the Balkans in 1875 and 1876. Nikolai Ignatiev, the Russian ambassador to Istanbul between 1864 and 1877, had secretly been trying to promote Pan-Slavism since his appointment to the Ottoman capital. He originally promoted the idea that Austria-Hungary was the greatest threat to the Balkan Slavs and that by fostering a strong relationship with the Ottomans, Russia could keep the Habsburgs at bay and eventually turn the Ottoman Empire into a satellite state.<sup>105</sup> However, Ignatiev gradually lost his patience with the sultan and secretly began trying to subvert Ottoman attempts to implement any reforms that might appease the Christian Slavs. He tried to form alliances with antireform officials such as Nedim Paşa, who was opposed to seemingly pro-Western policies that would strengthen the position of Christians in the empire, and fomented separatist sentiment among Christian Slavs in 1875 and 1876. With the failure of the Istanbul Conference in January 1877 and Russia's concomitant acquisition of Austria-Hungary's permission to move its troops through Romania, which had been an

---

<sup>104</sup> Celil writes that many songs refer to this battle. Celil, *Intifadat al-akrad 'am 1880*, 36.

<sup>105</sup> David Harris, *A Diplomatic History of the Balkan Crisis of 1875-1878: The First Year* (Stanford, CA: California University Press, 1936), 43-44.

impediment to Russia during the Crimean War, Ottoman officials began to brace themselves for what appeared to be imminent war.<sup>106</sup> Since many British politicians, mainly of the Liberal Party, were hardened against the policy of maintaining Ottoman integrity and preferred nonintervention against a Russian invasion, the Ottomans were left on their own to defend themselves against the Czar's forces.

Russia's strategy was to penetrate the Balkans and Eastern Anatolia simultaneously. They caught officials by surprise in the east and managed to capture Beyazıt without resistance, forcing local forces to completely abandon the already dilapidated town, only two days after the declaration of war on April 26. On May 17 the Russians took Ardahan by assault.<sup>107</sup>

Local Kurdish groups appeared to have been anticipating a Russian invasion and were preparing to seize control of what regions that they could. Many of them doubted the Ottomans' capacity to protect them both from the Russians and from Russian-backed Christian groups and began to act independently of Ottoman command. Shaykh Jelaluddin of Hızan, who had a reputation of switching allegiance back and forth between the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran, took "advantage of the war provoked by Russia... plundering and murdering right and left."<sup>108</sup> The *vali* of Van, Hasan Paşa, almost lost control over Kurdish groups in the Van province, many of whom, he believed, sought his capture. Consul Zohrab wrote that Hasan was "obliged to secure his own safety by keeping secret and changing constantly the place he sleeps in, generally selecting the

---

<sup>106</sup> Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2: 181.

<sup>107</sup> *Daily News Correspondence of the War Between Russia and Turkey* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878), xi-xii.

<sup>108</sup> Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby, Therapia, July 10, 1877, *Turkey no. 1* (1878), p. 64, no. 90, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 80-81.



place of some poor remote Christian.” He braced himself for a Kurdish attack on Van that he feared could result in the “massacre of the people” by placing “twelve guns...in position in the citadel” and pointing them toward the streets.<sup>109</sup>

The Russo-Turkish war exposed the fragmented loyalties of different groups and that while there was certainly a deep distrust of Christians, ethnicity and religion were not always determinants of interaction between groups. Kurdish groups did not generally appear deeply committed to the Ottoman state, and instead tended to pursue their own political aims. Some Kurds, especially near the Russian border, tended to be more hostile towards Armenian groups, whom they deeply mistrusted. A missionary in Van reported to Consul Zohrab in July 1877 that Kurdish groups near Beyazıt and Başkale were killing Christian noncombatants. However, the missionary noted that the Kurdish groups who “came and stripped every village” were generally “from Persia,” while Kurdish groups living on the Ottoman side, notably Shaykh Ubaydullah’s men, “passed through villages without doing serious injury.” Nonetheless, Armenian villages on the border with Iran were mostly deserted and many Armenians fled toward Russia and Iran. However, the Armenians living in Başkale did not flee since there was a *kaymakam*, a state appointee, there who had the power to detain and punish rebel groups, a sign that some state officials were intent on protecting the Armenians and bringing justice to marauders.<sup>110</sup>

Those Kurdish groups who did commit the ravages were more brutal than they had habitually been. James Creagh noted that the in town of Eleşkirt, near the Russian

---

<sup>109</sup> Consul Zohrab to Mr. Layard, Erzurum, June 30, 1877, *Turkey no.* (1878), p. 64-65, no. 90/1, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 81.

<sup>110</sup> Unnamed American missionaries at Van to Consul Zohrab, Van, July 2, 1877, *Turkey No. 1* (1878), p. 97, no. 139/2, Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 83.

border, “churches were ransacked, plundered, or defiled; and fierce bigotry, brutal lust, and avarice ran riot.”<sup>111</sup> He adds that in the vicinity of Eleşkirt, “Armenian villages were silent and empty [and] no signs of life or movement enlivened the deserted plains.”<sup>112</sup>

The motivation for the destruction of churches is unclear. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as a sign that some groups had begun to see the mere presence of Christianity as a threat since it served as rallying call for the Armenians against the Ottomans. On the other hand it can be interpreted as a tactic used by some Kurdish groups against local rivals to deprive them of their client agrarian class. The desertion of agrarian Armenians had catastrophic consequences for the land, since it was left untilled and put the Kurdish groups who relied on the cultivators for taxes and provisions at a disadvantage.

Many Kurds in the Beyazıt region were greatly hostile toward Russians and Armenians. On June 19 Faik Paşa and about eight thousand Kurdish irregulars under his command attempted to retake the city from the Russians. According to Boswell, Faik Paşa and Ismail Paşa, a Kurdish Ottoman commander from the Digor region, attempted to starve the Cossack brigade by depriving them of their water supply. Although some 1,200 Cossacks willing surrendered and laid down their weapons, the irregulars attempted to kill them all.<sup>113</sup> Also, in a show of spite, marauders, according to an unnamed Protestant Armenian at Van, killed some 480 persons at Beyazıt and took 340 women and children into captivity for “base purposes.”<sup>114</sup> The massacre stopped once

---

<sup>111</sup> James Creagh, *Armenians, Koords, and Turks* (London: S. Tinsley & Co., 1880), 262.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>113</sup> Charles Boswell Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877* (London, Paris, New York: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1878), 221.

<sup>114</sup> Consul Zohrab, Erzurum, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, *Turkey no. 1* (1878), p. 287, no. 318, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 91.

regular soldiers arrived on the scene. Survivors of the massacre were escorted to Van from where they were given shelter in Maku, a few miles across the Iranian border. It should be noted that local Muslims at Beyazıt did not participate in the violence against the Christians. In fact according to Boswell, who is particularly critical of the Kurds and the Ottoman state, the Kurdish irregulars even hurt Muslims who had been taken captive. Also Muslims sheltered many Christians in their homes from the violent onslaught of the irregulars. The Armenian observer attributes the benevolence of these Muslims to the fact that many local Christians had sheltered them when the Russians invaded.<sup>115</sup>

It cannot be asserted that all Kurds inherently desired the departure of the Armenians. A missionary in Bitlis reported that Ottoman officials near Bitlis collaborated with “nomadic” Kurds to fend off an invasion by the Motkanlı tribe, who sought to free prisoners from their tribe who were being held for murdering an Armenian and to plunder the villages in the environs of Bitlis. The “nomadic” Kurds, probably agriculturalists without attachment to predominant tribal confederations such as the Motkanlı, expressed their intention to protect the Armenians from plunder and potential assault since “they were their customers, and bought the produce [that] they brought into the city.”<sup>116</sup> Divisions among these “nomadic” Kurds blunted the effectiveness of the joint force. Nonetheless this instance is an illustration that many Kurdish groups envisioned a future with their Armenian neighbors, enjoyed friendly relations with them, and hoped to restore the status quo ante after the war.

Since the Ottomans—particularly Samih Paşa who had served as *vali* of Erzurum

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.; Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, 221.

<sup>116</sup> Unnamed American missionaries to Consul Zohrab, Bitlis, June 28, 1877, *Turkey No. 1* (1878), p. 96-97, No. 13/1, Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 82.

twice and as *vali* of Trabzon and Aleppo between 1871 and 1876<sup>117</sup>—were well aware of the Kurds’ fickleness and anticipated the defection of some *beys* to Russia in the event of a war, they sought to secure stronger alliances with them in 1876. Samih Paşa sought the support of one of the leading figures of the Hayderanlı tribe at the time, Ali Ağa, and gave him gifts and awards. Samih made him the *müdür* of one of the *kazas* between Van and Beyazıt, a position which gave him control over many of the inhabitants of the Beyazıt region. In exchange, Ali Ağa promised to furnish two thousand cavalymen from the Hayderanlı tribe to the Ottoman army.<sup>118</sup> Ali Ağa’s appointment harked back to Ottoman strategy in relation to the Kurds during the earlier part of the nineteenth century, which was to offer exceptionally large political privileges in exchange for loyalty. However, Ali Ağa’s power arguably extended over a much smaller radius than that of earlier Kurdish *beys*. The Ottomans also attempted to entice Ismail Hakkı Paşa to their side by appointing him to a powerful position in the military.<sup>119</sup>

As was the case in earlier wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, many Kurds living near the border sided with the Russians, since many Kurdish groups near Kars had long been pro-Russian. One the most intriguing allies of Russia was Yusuf Bey of Digor, a village located near the Ottoman-Russian border between Kars and Beyazıt, who was the nephew of Ismail Hakkı Paşa. He was also of the Hayderanlı tribal confederation and was “bought over by the Russians” in 1876. He supplied the Russian

---

<sup>117</sup> Sinan Kunalp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricali (1839-1922): Prosopografik Rehber* [Ottoman Dignitaries During the Late Period (1839-1922): A Prosopographic Guide] (Istanbul: Isis, 2003), 77.

<sup>118</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 174.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

army with grain during the war.<sup>120</sup>

Manzur Ağa and Nafiz Ağa of the Dersim region also contacted the Russian consul in Erzurum on the eve of the war informing him of their willingness to join the Russians against the Ottomans, but they received no reply.<sup>121</sup> It does appear that the Russians were well aware of many Dersim inhabitants' opposition to the state. But because of their distance from the Russian-Ottoman border, the Russians did not initially attempt to foster a strong relationship with them.<sup>122</sup> Nonetheless, many Kurdish elites in the Dersim region were emboldened by the Russian invasion and decided to wage a campaign of their own against the Ottoman state in 1877. Ahmet Ağa, the head of the Koç Uşağı tribe, led a band of rebels to occupy Kemaliye and Çemişgezek. Despite the fact that the Ottomans were engaged in combat with Russian forces in Kars and needed all the troops they could muster from the provinces, they found the rebellion to be of such concern that they had Osman Bey, the *kaymakam* of Eğin, dispatch a regiment in order to retake the cities. Ahmet Ağa was able to fend off the state forces for a period by forming an alliance with Alişan Ağa of the Ferhat Uşağı tribe, but he was eventually captured and exiled to Sinop.<sup>123</sup>

Rebellions spread throughout the Dersim region well beyond Kemaliye and Çemişgezek. The Kırgan tribe stormed Hozat and Mazgirt during the war and plundered much of the region, even burning down the military barracks.<sup>124</sup> Many Kurdish rebels in central Dersim lodged themselves in the Toshik mountains from where they frequently

---

<sup>120</sup> Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, 293.

<sup>121</sup> Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Dersim Sancağı*, 81.

<sup>122</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 162.

<sup>123</sup> Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Dersim Sancağı*, 81.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*; Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 162.

launched attacks against Ottoman forces. The Kurdish rebels managed to enlist the support of a number of Kurdish tribes and Armenians and engaged in a standoff with the sultan's forces that lasted two weeks. Unable to penetrate the natural mountain fortress, the Ottoman military resorted to burning Kurdish properties and destroying their supply line to try to starve them out. The move was successful in forcing rebels to migrate from the mountains and flee toward Khut-Tirs where state forces were able to attack them.<sup>125</sup> Throughout the war, Dersim remained a thorn in the side of the state. The state was generally able to keep rebellions in check and contain recalcitrant inhabitants long enough to keep the spirit of opposition from spreading into neighboring regions, thus increasing the area's vulnerability to Russian penetration. But, as in other regions, the Ottomans did not win the hearts and minds of the population and were forced to make some political concessions to Kurdish elites in order to maintain their loyalty.

Not all Armenians were necessarily well disposed towards the Russians. The Armenian Patriarch Nerses informed Sir Henry Layard, the British ambassador in Istanbul, that an Armenian Archimandrite refused to call upon Armenians to side with the Russians. Consequently the Russians burned his monastery, which possessed a "valuable collection of Armenian ecclesiastical manuscripts."<sup>126</sup> It is also apparent that many high-ranking figures in the Armenian *millet* were not particularly keen on Russia and feared that they might fare no better under them than under the Ottomans. Sultan Abdülhamit II was able to appoint a number of pro-Ottoman Armenians as aides-de-camp during the

---

<sup>125</sup> Celile Celil, *Intifada*, 36-37.

<sup>126</sup> Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby, Therapia, July 24, 1877, *Turkey No. 1* (1878), p. 101, No. 143, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 86.

war and promoted some to the prestigious rank of *müşir*.<sup>127</sup> The Armenian Patriarch Nerses Varzhabedian and a number of Armenian “notables” accepted the invitation by the sultan to have Armenians enrolled in the civic guard “for the defense of the country.” However, they came under great pressure from Armenians in the National Assembly to rescind their decision.<sup>128</sup>

It was also very clear by the end of 1877 that painful socioeconomic measures were being taken against the local population as a result of the oppressive demands of the war. Ottoman demands for money and food from locals throughout Eastern Anatolia were more than the population, many of whom had been forced out of their homes, could bear. Consul Zohrab notes that hundreds of Muslims and Christians in Erzurum were “starving” as a result of the conflict and made demands for food aid.<sup>129</sup>

By January 1878, the Russians sought to penetrate Eastern Anatolia more deeply. This was more difficult than penetrating the Balkans, not only because of the rugged terrain of Eastern Anatolia, but also because there was a higher concentration of discontented Muslims, who placed greater demands on the Russians for military reinforcements in the occupied areas. A Muslim revolt in Kars in early January held

---

<sup>127</sup> Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby, Constantinople, December 19, 1877, *Turkey No. 1* (1878), p. 579, No. 634, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 150; Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby, Constantinople, December 28, 1877, FO 424/66, p. 24, No. 51, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 151; Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby, Constantinople, December 29, 1877, FO 424/66, p. 32, No. 70, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 151.

<sup>128</sup> Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby, Constantinople, December 18, 1877, FO 424/63, p. 185, No. 633, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 149-150.

<sup>129</sup> Consul Zohrab to the Earl of Derby, Erzurum, December 8, 1877, FO 424/66, p. 1, No. 1, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 142-143.

Russian forces back briefly,<sup>130</sup> although in a letter dated January 20, 1878, Major-General Loris-Melikov informed the Grand Duke of Russia that Russian forces had managed to penetrate the regions around Olti and Hınıs and “firmly install their administration there.” Furthermore he wrote that they had managed to “gain influence over the Kurds (*priobresti vliyaniye na Kurdov*)” to the extent that none of them showed any resistance to the Russians on their march from Eleşkirt and Hınıs toward Malazgirt with the exception of a few whom Loris-Melikov believed to have been “instigated by the Ottomans.”<sup>131</sup>

The continued Russian successes against the Ottomans in December and January deeply concerned the British. By December, it was clear that trepidation had begun to grow among the British that any deep Russian penetration of the Ottomans’ eastern front would pose a significant threat to them in the future. Sir Henry Layard wrote from Istanbul that a Russian occupation of “Kars, Batoum, and Van would give Russia such advantages in any future war with Turkey, or Persia, as to place the northern provinces of the latter country, and the whole of the Turkish territory in Asia, at her mercy.”<sup>132</sup> On January 31 the British forced the Russians and Ottomans to accept an armistice.

Yet in spite of British political intervention in the conflict, the Russians continued to press westward. On February 19, 1878, some nine thousand Turkish forces fled Erzurum in anticipation of a Russian invasion. By February 28 it was clear that Russian forces were installed in the city and that local Armenians were proclaiming victory. A

---

<sup>130</sup> Vice-Consul Biliotti to the Earl of Derby, Trabzon, January 9, 1878, FO 424/66, pp. 111-112, No. 225, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 153.

<sup>131</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 215.

<sup>132</sup> Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby, Constantinople, December 4, 1877, FO 424/63, pp. 86-89, No. 124, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 136.



British doctor in Erzurum reported that “the Armenian population makes no secret of their satisfaction at being delivered from the rule of the unspeakable Turk. They at once make friends with the [Russian] soldiers, and are proud to be seen in company with them; in face their behavior is utterly contemptible and quite worthy of their traditions. It remains to be seen, though, whether they will be one whit better off under the Russians.”<sup>133</sup>

Britain sent her navy to preempt Russia, as its forces were six miles west of Istanbul, and eventually forced the Ottomans and the Russians to end the conflict with the signature of the Treaty of San Stefano on March 3, 1878.

### Negotiating the Future

Before Britain intervened to put an end to Russian encroachment and force the signing of a treaty, the various local actors had been hedging their bets as to how best to negotiate the future of Eastern Anatolia to suit their individual interests. The Russian government desired to keep as much of Eastern Anatolia as possible under its full control to use the region as a launching pad for future forays into the region. While it sought the support of the Armenians to put political pressure on the Ottoman government for increased freedoms, it was not particularly keen on the idea of an independent Armenian state, since it could potentially limit its control over the affairs of the region.

The Armenians were divided over how their collective future could best be negotiated after the war. While nearly all Armenians appeared to welcome Russia as an instrument in helping to remedy many of the grievances suffered by the larger Armenian

---

<sup>133</sup> A.L. Macfie, “Two Letters from Erzurum,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 4 (October, 1986): 571-575.

community, many were not keen on the idea of coming under Russian control. Sometime during the war, the Armenian National Assembly met in private under the leadership of Patriarchs Nerses and Izmirlian. It prepared a memorandum and sent it to Catholicos George IV whom they asked to look it over and then forward to the Czar. The authors of the memorandum expressed their hope that “Greater Armenia [*Mets Hayk*], whose border extends to the Euphrates, not be returned to the Turks, but that it be considered a part of the Czar’s domain, being united with the province of Ararat.”<sup>134</sup> The memorandum went on to ask the Czar to grant the Armenians the same privileges that they had granted the Bulgarians and not evacuate her soldiers (under the expectation that future circumstances might oblige Russian forces to leave the region) until reforms had been made. It also requested that Armenians be appointed to high political office, receive military training, and that Kurds and Circassians be settled and not be allowed to serve in the police force, at least initially.<sup>135</sup>

Patriarch Izmirlian remained committed to the idea that the best future arrangement for the Armenians could most realistically be achieved by pledging allegiance to Russia’s rule. He considered that Russia was most interested in making the region a “vassal state” under its suzerainty and that some form of Russian control in the future was a more likely possibility than a fully independent Armenia.<sup>136</sup> Patriarch Nerses on the other hand was more wary of Russian rule. In a letter to Prince Gorchakov on February 3, 1878, he wrote that he desired to “live in [an] Armenia under our own

---

<sup>134</sup> Arakel Zatiki Sarukhan, *Haykakan Khendirn ev Azgayin Sahmanadrutiune Turkiayum (1860-1910)* [The Armenian Question and the National Constitution (1860-1910)] (Tiflis: Ėlektrasharzh Tparan Epokha, 1912), 260.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>136</sup> He elaborates on his ideas in Uras, *The Armenians in History*, 444.

rule, free from the oppression of another state, where we can preserve our homeland.”<sup>137</sup>

Even Armenians in Echmiadzin were greatly divided over their stances toward Russia. For instance, Catholicos George IV had no issue with being under the Czar’s control, while his assistant Vahram Manguni, who influenced many of the Catholicos’ policies, was hostile toward the Czar and sought independence.<sup>138</sup>

The inclusion of an article about the Armenians in the Treaty of San Stefano was largely due to the efforts of Patriarch Nerses, who made a last-minute entreaty to the Grand Duke Nicholas to make a provision for the Armenians.<sup>139</sup> Urged by Count Ignatiev to comply with the Patriarch’s request, Article 16 was created. It states:

As the withdrawal of the Russian troops from those parts of Armenia now under their occupation and the return of those territories to the administration of the Sublime Porte may give rise to conflicts injurious to the friendly relations between our two governments, the Sublime Porte engages to carry out, without loss of time, the reforms and re-organization demanded by local interests in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians and to ensure the security of the Armenians against the depredations of the Kurds and Circassians.<sup>140</sup>

The article is revealing of how Russia envisioned future control over the region. They would keep troops in what areas they could while relying on the Ottoman state, which they hoped would act under Russian suzerainty, to undertake the necessary reforms to restore order and bring justice to the non-Muslim populations in the region.

The British sought to maintain Eastern Anatolia as a buffer zone between the more central parts of the empire and the Russian-held Caucasus. They used the region as a bargaining chip to acquire possession of Cyprus as a key naval base in the

---

<sup>137</sup> Uras, *The Armenians in History*, 442.

<sup>138</sup> Uras, *The Armenians in History*, 444.

<sup>139</sup> According to Tumaian, the Treaty did not originally include anything about the Armenians. See *ibid.*, 447.

<sup>140</sup> Article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano, cited in *ibid.*, 447-448.

Mediterranean. On June 4, 1878, the Ottomans and the British signed an agreement that stipulated that the Ottomans would cede Cyprus to Britain on the condition that British would support the sultan in the upcoming international negotiations in Berlin and help him maintain control over Eastern Anatolia.<sup>141</sup>

Conspicuously absent from the negotiating process was perhaps one of the most important actors in Eastern Anatolia: the Kurds. Kurdish groups were viewed negatively by almost all players on the Eastern Anatolian scene. Most of the Armenians viewed them as the source of their grievances. The British saw them as a group of unruly tribes for whom the Ottoman state bore the ultimate responsibility of controlling. The Ottomans viewed them as unmanageable and had a lingering desire to revert to the old status quo of affording them semiautonomy, albeit on a much lesser degree, in return for keeping the peace. The Russians viewed the Kurds as savages whom they could at times exploit for their own political gain. Yet by the Russo-Turkish War 1877-1878 it was becoming increasingly clear that the Kurds were developing greater understanding of how not only Ottoman policy, but also international politics, might affect them and that they were plotting ways to preempt political circumstances that would be to their disadvantage. Yet the Ottomans afforded the Kurds no representation as an ethnic group, but instead continued to count them as part of the Ottoman Muslim community whom they represented without their consent before the international powers.

In a letter to the Marquis of Salisbury, Vice Consul Billiotti in Trabzon captures the sense of frustration that Eastern Anatolian Muslims felt toward the state:

---

<sup>141</sup> H.W.V. Temperley, "Disraeli and Cyprus," *The English Historical Review* 46, no. 182 (April 1931): 274-279. As early as 1847, Disraeli had expressed a desire for Britain to take Cyprus.

The Mussulmans are clamoring as loudly as, and with more reason than, the Christians, for a better administration.... They can only apply for redress to the very authorities against which they have to complain; they are restrained by a sort of patriotism, or by religious fanaticism, from submitting their grievances against their own government to foreigners; and with British Agents, in cases of flagrant injustice which may happen to come to their knowledge, Consuls never raise their voice in favor of oppressed Mussulmans; they are not in the habit to give publicity through the press to the abuses heaped upon them, and, if they did so, no heed would be taken of their complaints.<sup>142</sup>

### Revolt and Disorder

After the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin, a significant part of Eastern Anatolia fell into a state of even greater political disarray than it had previously been, and rival Muslim groups resumed their contestations for power with one another.

Kurdish groups in Dersim rose against the Ottoman government just after the conclusion of the Berlin conference. State forces seemed to have crushed the rebellion by October,<sup>143</sup> although according to a report in December, Ottoman forces were still keeping the Kurds at Dersim under armed supervision.<sup>144</sup> The sons of Bedr Khan, Hüseyin Kenan and Osman Bey, attempted to mobilize resistance against the state in Cizre in late 1878. During the 1877-1878 war they, along with other sons of Bedr Khan, were commissioned by the Ottomans to leave Istanbul, where they had been residing, and gather soldiers from different parts of the empire. Bedri Bey was assigned to gather three thousand soldiers from Syria, Hüseyin Kenan three thousand from Adana, and Ali Şamil

---

<sup>142</sup> Vice-Consul Biliotti to the Marquis of Salisbury, Trabzon, November 8, 1878, FO 424/76, p. 405-407, No. 554, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 254-255.

<sup>143</sup> Mr. Cole to Vice-Consul Biliotti, Erzurum, October 30, 1878, *Turkey No. 54* (1878), p. 210, No. 242/1, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 252.

<sup>144</sup> Captain Trotter, R.E., to the Marquis of Salisbury, Erzurum, December 4, 1878, *Turkey No. 10* (1879), p. 7, No. 5, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 277.

three thousand from Istanbul.

However, the decision to place them in charge of bringing together forces was based on wishful, if not desperate, thinking and resulted in relative failure. Bedri Bey managed to find a number of volunteers, but complained of the lack of provisions given to them by the state and left them in the hands of Mustafa Ağa, one of his close associates.<sup>145</sup> Hüseyin Kenan Bey appeared to have indeed gone to Adana and then Aleppo to assemble a group of volunteers, but fled sometime after the war in mid-1878 to Cizre via the Tigris River.<sup>146</sup>

By November 1878, Hüseyin Kenan and Osman Beys managed to amass a force of some five to twenty thousand Kurdish men in the Cizre region, which they led to occupy the treasury and weapons caches around Deh and Siirt and oust the *kaymakam*. Consul Trotter reports that according to private letters sent to him from missionaries and others at Bitlis, Hüseyin Kenan and Osman were “not...specially harassing the Christians, but...devoting their energies principally against the Government troops” leading Trotter to suspect that “Russian intrigue [was] at the bottom of the movement.”<sup>147</sup> According to Averyanov, Hüseyin Kenan and Osman managed to gain the support of Kurdish groups in Hakkari and the Yazidi Kurds in the surrounding region. If it is indeed true that the sons of Bedr Khan formed a multiethnic base consisting of Christians and Yazidis, then it represented a movement that was based on a more defined political vision than other Kurdish groups in the region, many of whom saw Christians as a major threat.

---

<sup>145</sup> Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu’da Türk Beylikleri*, 119.

<sup>146</sup> Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 225.

<sup>147</sup> Captain Trotter, R.E., to the Marquis of Salisbury, Erzurum, December 4, 1878, *Turkey No. 10* (1879), p. 7, No. 5, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 277.

If it is also true that the sons of Bedr Khan sought to enlist the support of the Yazidis, then it represents a major breach from the days of their father who sought to cow them brutally into submission. Trotter reported that the men of Hüseyin Kenan and Osman were armed with a large number of Winchester and Henry-Martini rifles which they had gathered “during and subsequent to the war,” an indication of the persuasive powers that they had among both the Ottoman military leaders, whom they tricked into distributing weapons to them, and the very volunteers who helped them transport those weapons to Cizre.<sup>148</sup>

The Ottomans began dispatching forces from Diyarbakır, Erzincan, and Erzurum by late November to put down the rebellion in the Cizre-Siirt region.<sup>149</sup> Accompanying them was Bedri Bey who convinced his brothers that Ottoman forces would eventually crush their revolt, and that they should return with him to Istanbul. Hüseyin Kenan and Osman obliged and were imprisoned for only a few months. After their release they were ordered to remain in Istanbul.<sup>150</sup>

Some Armenian groups who were disillusioned with the prospect of remaining under complete Ottoman control rose in rebellion. Small yet significant Armenian rebellions occurred in Van and Diyarbakır in 1878, which Ottoman forces were able to put down with relative ease.<sup>151</sup> The most significant Armenian revolt against the Ottoman state took place in Zeytun between 1878 and 1879. Located in Cilicia, Zeytun

---

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> BBA, A.MKT.MHM 483/42, 28 Zilkade 1295/24 November 1878; Averyanov, *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii*, 1: 225.

<sup>150</sup> Malmisanij, *Cizira Botanlı Bedirhaniler*, 147-149.

<sup>151</sup> Anonymous letter from European official in Aleppo, BBA, Y.EE.KP 1/33, 18 Zilkade 1295/14 November 1295, p. 2.

was distant from other places in Eastern Anatolia. Nonetheless, political incidents initiated by the Armenians there often influenced political action in other Armenian-inhabited areas of the empire. For instance, the 1862 Zeytun revolt certainly reverberated among Armenians in Muş, who rebelled in 1863-1864.

Between 1865 and 1875 few incidents occurred between Christian and Muslim groups in Zeytun, a period of relative peace largely attributable to a series of reforms that the state attempted to implement there. Some of these reforms were aimed at appeasing the local Armenian and Muslim populations by balancing power between them. The creation of a joint Muslim-Armenian police force and the redistribution of land to an increasing number of Muslim and Armenian inhabitants weakened the power of elite Armenian and Muslim families who had hitherto posed frequent threats to state authority.<sup>152</sup> Yet the state was attentive to potential demands that local groups often raised. Hence they created a *meclis*, which consisted of four Armenian members and two Muslims in 1871, with the aim of keeping locals content.<sup>153</sup> However, the Armenian inhabitants of Zeytun were generally unhappy with the Ottomans' decision to appoint a Muslim *kaymakam* over the region who collected regular taxes from them and kept their activities under close surveillance. In addition, the state paid select Armenian religious elites a tribute (*taltif*) to maintain their loyalties in the event of insurrection. Thus the Ottoman government awarded Papaz Masus Efendi, an Armenian priest appointed by the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul a *taltif* to govern the affairs of Zeytun in 1866.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>152</sup> BBA, A.MKT.MHM 364/20, 23 Cemaziyülevvel 1283/3 October 1866.

<sup>153</sup> Nejla Günay, *Maraş'ta Ermeniler ve Zeytun İsyanları* [The Armenians of Maraş and the Zeytun Rebellions] (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Yayıncılık Sanat, 2007), 109.

<sup>154</sup> BBA, A.MKT.MHM 364/20, 23 Cemaziyülevvel 1283/3 October 1866.



There is some discrepancy in different sources as to the starting date of the revolt in Zeytun. According to Aghassi's memoirs of Zeytun, published in 1897—which is widely cited by subsequent Armenian-language historians—the rebellion of Zeytun began in June 1876 when Prince Babig Yeni Dunya, of an elite Armenian family in the region, led an armed group of some three hundred Armenians from their mountain refuge to the town of Zeytun where they sacked the *kaymakam*'s house, burned the mosque, and established independent control.<sup>155</sup> In 1900, Zeytuntsi wrote that “the Zeytuntsis<sup>156</sup> lived freely for three whole years [1876-1879] without a *kaymakam*, independent from the government of Maraş.”<sup>157</sup> Given the intensity of British and Russian vigilance of Ottoman political affairs in 1876, it would be highly significant for a successful Armenian rebellion to have taken place in Zeytun with no foreign acknowledgement. It would also be significant for the Ottoman state to tolerate an autonomous Armenian administration in Zeytun for such a long and politically unstable period. While the exact date of the rebellion is unclear, it appears from Ottoman documents that a group of Armenians rose in revolt toward the end of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877-1878. A year-end report from 1294 (January 16, 1877-January 4, 1878) reveals that relations between the Ottoman state and local Armenians in Zeytun worsened when Davud Efendi (whom contemporary Armenian observer Aghassi calls Davud Niyazi), the former *kaymakam* accused of murdering his Armenian aide, was “temporarily and conditionally” set free

---

<sup>155</sup> See Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 150; Nersisian, *Hay Zhoghovrdi Azatagrakan Paykare*, 129; Poghosian, *Zeytuni Patmutyune 1409-1921* [The History of Zeytun 1409-1921] (Yerevan: Hayastan Hratarakchutyun, 1969), 278-279.

<sup>156</sup> Meaning the inhabitants of Zeytun in Armenian.

<sup>157</sup> Zeytuntsi, *Zeytuni Antsyalen yev Nergayen* [Zeytun: Past and Present] (Vienna: Mkhitarian Tparan, 1900), 131.

from captivity along with other Muslim and Christian convicts in Zeytun.<sup>158</sup> Since his appointment as *kaymakam*, Davut Efendi had been accused by local Armenians of levying excessive taxes on the local population and of accepting bribes in exchange for appointments to positions in the local *meclis*. One night when his house was broken into and his gold stolen, Davut Efendi accused his servant Hagop Topalian of conspiring with the thieves. Unable to force a confession after torturing him, Davut allegedly stabbed him to death.<sup>159</sup> The brutal nature of his death led to an outcry among the local Armenians who demanded justice from the Ottoman authorities. Davut's case was heard before a joint Muslim-Christian appellate court and he was convicted of criminal activity but given a light sentence.<sup>160</sup>

The rebels who allegedly stormed Zeytun destroyed the *kaymakam*'s house, burned the local mosque, and ousted the state administrators were led by Prince Babig. Since the Ottoman state could not spare a great number of troops to retake Zeytun at the time, it attempted to persuade local groups to fight Babig. State authorities attempted to enlist the support of the Bozdoğan tribe in the region to beat back the Armenian rebels. However, their attempt to take Zeytun was rendered unsuccessful for two reasons. First, they were engaged in a political struggle against rivals, both Christian and Muslim, in the Gaban plains, who, according to Aghassi, enlisted the support of Babig to resist them. Second, Babig was a better military strategist than the leader of the Bozdoğan tribe

---

<sup>158</sup> Letter from the *vali* of Aleppo Kamil Paşa to the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior, BBA, HR.SYS 78/6, 27 Rebiyülevvel 1296/21 March 1879, p. 1. Also see Poghosian, *Zeytuni Patmutyune*, 279-280 according to whom Arslan Bey was the replacement *kaymakam*.

<sup>159</sup> Poghosian, *Zeytuni Patmutyune*, 278-279.

<sup>160</sup> Letter from the *vali* of Aleppo Kamil Paşa to the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior, BBA, HR.SYS 78/6, 27 Rebiyülevvel 1296/21 March 1879, p. 1.

Boyrazoğlu, and was able to defeat them in spite of having fewer men.<sup>161</sup>

Babig's defeat of the Bozdoğan tribe enabled him and his forces to expand into the neighboring Muslim villages of Tanur, Döngöl, Kurtul, and Nedirli in the spring of 1878.<sup>162</sup> Kamil Paşa accuses Babig's forces of being responsible for "blocking caravans, plundering money, merchandise, and flocks, and killing and exterminating a great number of men and women."<sup>163</sup> The Ottoman government dispatched forces in July to try to put down the rebellion. Although they managed to seize twelve hundred weapons and arrest two hundred individuals,<sup>164</sup> a handful of well-armed rebels escaped arrest by fleeing to the mountains from where they launched periodic raids on Zeytun. The revolt of the Kozanoğlu tribal confederation, which consisted of Kurdish and Turcoman tribes and spread throughout Konya, Kayseri, and Adana at the time, deterred the Ottomans from launching a full-scale invasion of Zeytun.<sup>165</sup> Nonetheless the Ottomans were able to prevent Babig from making an alliance with the Kozanoğlu and from expanding his domain.<sup>166</sup>

Between July and November, the Zeytun rebellion attracted the attention of Armenians throughout different parts of the empire and became an issue of great

---

<sup>161</sup> Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 153.

<sup>162</sup> Letter from the *vali* of Aleppo Kamil Paşa to the Grand Vizier, BBA, A.MKT.MHM 483/64, 21 Rebiyülevvel 1296/15 March 1879; Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 151-152; Poghosian, *Zeytuni Patmutyune*, 281-282.

<sup>163</sup> "Caddelerdeki kervanları çevirip kâffe-i emval ve eşya ve mevaşilerini gasp ve yağma ve zükur ve inas hayli nüfuslarını katl ve imha etmeleri üzerine," Letter from the *vali* of Aleppo Kamil Paşa to the Grand Vizier, BBA, A.MKT.MHM 483/64, 21 Rebiyülevvel 1296/15 March 1879, p. 3; also see Anonymous letter from European official in Aleppo, BBA, Y.EE.KP 1/33, 18 Zilkade 1295/14 November 1295, which appears to inform Kamil Paşa.

<sup>164</sup> Günay, *Maraş'ta Ermeniler*, 252.

<sup>165</sup> Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 154-155.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 155-156; Günay, *Maraş'ta Ermeniler*, 251.

controversy among them. Khrimian looked positively at the rebellion and saw it as a sign that the question of Armenian independence was worthy of greater attention from Russia, Britain, and France. On his way back from Berlin, Migirdich Khrimian ironically remarked that he “forgot to take the Zeytun rebels” with him to the conference in order to throw greater weight behind his demands. “They have ladles” instead of paper, he said, with which to be able “scrape something from the bottom or the side of the bowl.”<sup>167</sup> By this Khrimian meant that the Zeytun rebels possessed the resources, symbolized by an iron ladle, with which to be able to partake of the limited portions of international soup of freedom and sovereignty instead of mere paper that could not hold the soup. Despite his praise of the Zeytun rebels, there is no evidence that Khrimian attempted to provide them with material support or manpower.

Besides Khrimian, other Armenians throughout the empire were excited by the Zeytun rebellion and lent it their full support. Most notably Kokaz, the nephew of one of the leading Armenian Gregorian ecclesiastical figures in Izmir, traveled to Zeytun to join the movement. He collaborated with Bishop Nikogos of the Firnis monastery in Zeytun to rally more Armenian recruits and petition the Europeans to provide them with money and arms. By mid-November, they managed to gather 600 more men to help fortify Zeytun.<sup>168</sup>

Not all Armenians were enthusiastic about the rebellion. Many believed themselves to be reliant on a stable Ottoman Empire for their livelihoods and were not particularly keen on the politics of the rebels, let alone the prospect of coming under

---

<sup>167</sup> K. Mikaelian, *The Will of the People*, 109, cited in Uras, *The Armenians in History*, 498.

<sup>168</sup> Günay, *Maraş'ta Ermeniler*, 253.

Russian control. According to Kamil Paşa it was the Armenian Catholics in the Zeytun area who tipped off the state authorities of plans for a rebellion.<sup>169</sup> Many Armenians willingly sided with the Ottoman state against the rebels. According to Aghassi, the Ottomans managed to secure the crucial alliance of an Armenian priest in Zeytun named Der-Garabet Ergaynian. Der-Garabet persuaded Veysi Paşa, the *mutasarrıf* of Maraş, in 1878 to keep pressure on Babig and his followers, despite the rising threat of the Kozanoğlu, and not let them gain strength by alliances with other rebel groups in the Ottoman Empire. He also rallied the support of other locals to prevent Babig Paşa from receiving ammunition from outside.<sup>170</sup>

While Patriarch Nerses Varzhabedian did not support the rebels, he told the Ottomans that he lacked the political and social capital to be able to put down the rebellion,<sup>171</sup> an indication that power in the Armenian *millet* had become increasingly diffuse since the promulgation of the Armenian Constitution of 1861 and especially because of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877-1878. Yet in October 1878 the Ottomans managed to recruit Bedros Efendi, an influential Armenian in Cilicia, to rally together Armenians throughout the region to support the Ottoman government.<sup>172</sup>

By early November 1878, the Ottomans struck a deal with the Kozanoğlu tribal confederacy, allowing them to focus their efforts on the Zeytun rebels. With forces gathered from Maraş, Aleppo, and Urfa, the Ottomans once again launched an offensive against Babig and his loyalists. This time they managed to capture Bishop Nikoghos, an

---

<sup>169</sup> BBA, A.MKT.MHM 483/64, 21 Rebiyülevvel 1296/15 March 1879, p. 2.

<sup>170</sup> Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 156-157; Nersisian, *Hay Zhoghovrdi Azatagrakan Paykare*, 129.

<sup>171</sup> Nersisian, *Hay Zhoghovrdi Azatagrakan Paykare*, 131.

<sup>172</sup> BBA, HR.SYS 78/6, 27 Rebiyülevvel 1296/21 March 1879, p. 2.

influential religious figure who helped shape the strategy behind the rebellion, as well as other key Zeytuni Armenian rebels. Babig, however, managed to escape once again to the mountains taking a small force with him.

The *vali* of Aleppo, Kamil Paşa, and his forces were reportedly much more aggressive during the November offensive than they had been previously in spite of the promises that they had made to Patriarch Nerses that they would tread more softly.<sup>173</sup> As a tactic to try to draw the rebels from the mountains, and possibly to redistribute the population, Kamil Paşa “seized nineteen Christian women and brought them as prisoners to that city,” a move that evoked strong outrage from Consul Henderson.<sup>174</sup> To appease the Consul, Kamil Paşa claimed that he was trying to protect them until Zeytun could be contained.<sup>175</sup>

Despite British pressure, the Ottomans kept refusing to accept the rebels’ demands of increased independence for Armenians in Zeytun and other Armenian-inhabited regions and insisted that they maintain an official presence in the region to monitor political activity closely. State officials worried that granting autonomy to Armenians in Zeytun would embolden other Armenian opposition groups in Eastern Anatolia to ratchet up their political demands and that perhaps Russia might once again become politically, if not even militarily, involved.

Social conditions in Zeytun were described as being in a dire state. Lieutenant

---

<sup>173</sup> The Patriarch wrote a letter to the British ambassador Sir Henry Layard protesting the deplorable treatment of the Armenians in Zeytun, Patriarch Nerses Varzhabedian to Layard, 26 November 1878, cited in Şimşir, 1; 267-268.

<sup>174</sup> Sir A.H. Layard to the Marquis of Salisbury, Therapia, November 25, 1878, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 263.

<sup>175</sup> Günay, *Maraş'ta Ermeniler*, 252.

Herbert Chermside, the British military vice-consul in Anatolia, reported in May 1879 that he had visited Zeytun and spent several days there. He noted that there was “not the slightest evidence existing of there ever having been anything worthy of the name rebellion. Although I am convinced that abundant evidence exists of the cruel, arbitrary, and fanatical acts of Weissi [Veysi] Pasha and other functionaries to disgrace them for life....The condition of the town and people of Zeytun is a disgrace to any Government, it is hardly an exaggeration to call it an outrage on humanity.”<sup>176</sup>

The rebels appeared to have gained the upper hand once more when they descended upon the town of Zeytun in January 1879, broke into the prison, and released the prisoners.<sup>177</sup> To prevent further conflict, the British intervened and tried to arrange a settlement between the Ottoman state and the rebels. On May 26, 1879, the rebels made the following set of demands: that those who had been taken prisoner from Ottoman raids in the mountains should be freed, that they should not be subject to pay the *bedel-i askeri* tax to relieve themselves of obligatory military service, that they should pay only a small tribute instead of regular taxes, that they should be able to bear arms to fend off local invaders (many of whom were ethnically Circassian), and that nomadic tribes should be prohibited from migrating through their area. The Ottomans accepted the demands with the following qualifications: that they still be subject to taxes (although reduced), that both Turkish and Armenian should be taught in the schools, that they should not wage attacks upon neighboring Muslims, and that some Armenian rebels should be tried before

---

<sup>176</sup> Lieutenant Chermside to Sir A.H. Layard, Zeytun, May 30, 1879, FO 424/84, p. 386, No. 484/1, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 452.

<sup>177</sup> Consul Henderson to Sir A.H. Layard, Aleppo, Januray 7, 1879, *Turkey No. 1* (1880), p. 16-17, No. 20/1, cited in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, 1: 297

a court before being set free. In August 1879, Babig Paşa and thirty other rebels were granted pardon and allowed administrative privileges over Zeytun.<sup>178</sup>

### Conclusion

The period between 1868 and 1878 was defining for Eastern Anatolia. Tensions between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, which culminated in war, resulted in an unprecedented degree of ethnic hostility between Armenians and Kurds in the region. While some communities held out a vision of a multiethnic and multireligious future for the region and sought to preserve as much as possible of the status quo ante of coexistence, cynicism grew to larger proportions as Muslim groups usurped lands and Armenians fled to Russia with hopes of a new and better life. With the sense of political and economic uncertainty growing in the region, groups felt an increasing need to take swift action to keep a hand in the shrinking power game. Groups found negotiation and coordination to be long and difficult processes and often opted for more violent and forceful methods of conflict preemption. It is intriguing that Kurdish groups, unlike the Armenians, did not seek outside non-Kurdish help in their rather desperate attempts to hold on to power. While many Armenians looked to the Russians, Kurds felt themselves stranded. Even though they often used the Ottoman state as leverage against rival Kurdish groups, they openly doubted its capacity in times of war to help them achieve control over their future. It was this sense of isolation that led Kurdish actors to resort to the unjust treatment of their neighbors. The Ottoman state knew it wanted to centralize control over Eastern Anatolia, but it had no clear vision of how to effectively do this.

---

<sup>178</sup> Günay, *Maraş'ta Ermeniler*, 259-263.



They too were cynical of the locals' abilities to maintain peace and comply with orders from Istanbul. The state's reluctance to invest in providing infrastructure in the region and integrating the population into its central administrative apparatus perpetuated deep sentiments of tension and mistrust.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to explain the nature of coexistence among diverse elements of Eastern Anatolia, identify the factors that generated tensions in society, and describe the reasons that tensions either intensified or decreased. As is the case in many multiethnic and multireligious communities throughout the world, tensions in Eastern Anatolia ran across more than just religious and ethnic lines. Tensions swelled along tribal, cultural, family, socioeconomic, state vs. local, indigenous vs. foreign, and agriculturalist vs. pastoralist lines as well. Additionally, some tensions were the result of personal power struggles and personality conflicts between two individuals and cannot be understood as having roots in collective differences. The idea that Muslims and Christians were in a perpetual religious struggle or that Kurds, Armenians, Turks, Assyrians, Lazes, Georgians, and Russians were in a perpetual ethnic struggle is incorrect. While religious and ethnic distinctions existed in Eastern Anatolia and institutions that were propped up by both top-down and bottom-up forces helped to emphasize and preserve ethnic and religious distinctions, these distinctions did not always translate into tensions that were bound to burst into violent conflict at a later point in time. Moreover, even amid economic hardship, international warfare, and overall political uncertainty, some tensions did not translate into violent conflict.

Coexistence, tension, and conflict in Eastern Anatolia during the nineteenth century cannot be explained without understanding earlier social contexts and earlier

patterns of coexistence and interaction among different indigenous and external groups. This may seem like stating the obvious; however, given the propensity of scholarship on Eastern Anatolia (and on many other regions of the world) to assume that the causes of conflicts in later periods of time are similar to the causes of conflicts in earlier periods of time, this point must be emphasized. In other words, the massacres of Armenians in 1915 do not help us understand the nature of tensions between Muslims and Christians in earlier periods. Likewise, the causes of the conflict between the modern Turkish government and separatist Kurdish groups in Eastern Anatolia that has been ongoing since the 1970s does not provide a window of insight into the conflict between Kurds and Turks during earlier periods.

At the same time, linear histories can be just as fallacious as retrospective histories and are prone to commit *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacies. It cannot be assumed that simply because event A occurred in the same location and immediately before event B that event A caused event B. For instance, the Armenian revolts of 1862-1863, the influx of Circassians into the Ottoman Empire beginning in 1863, and Ottoman attempts at land reform and administrative reform in Eastern Anatolia 1864-1871 cannot be said to mutually correspond. There is no evidence that the Armenian rebellions in Van, Zeytun, and Muş in 1862-1863 prompted Ottoman authorities to encourage Circassian Muslims to migrate to the Ottoman Empire from the Caucasus to increase the Muslim population in Armenian areas. Evidence is also lacking that Ottoman officials undertook land and administrative reforms in direct response to increases of refugees and demands by Armenians for autonomy. Similarly, it cannot be said that Ottoman attempts to centralize control in the late 1830s, particularly in the *eyalet* of Mosul, directly caused

the massacres of Assyrians in Tiyyari, Tkhuma, and Aşıta in the 1840s.

Explaining coexistence, tension, and conflict in Eastern Anatolia between 1800 and 1878 necessitates consideration of broad factors of international relations and Ottoman domestic policy alongside more local factors that are specific to different regions. Eastern Anatolian actors had long been accustomed to living in a region that was politically contested throughout the entire Ottoman period. They had also long been accustomed to living in an environment in which groups emphasized tribal, religious, and ethnic distinctions, which varied from region to region.

The experiences of Eastern Anatolians with the Ottoman state and with each other at a local level throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led them to develop a set of expectations that they carried into the nineteenth century. In relation to the Ottoman state, the general expectation among Eastern Anatolians was that it would maintain a minimalist presence in the region (not demanding high taxes and manpower for the military), protect the political privileges of different *beys*, root out excessive foreign interference (i.e., rival Kurdish tribes from Iran, Catholic missionaries, etc.), and preserve the status quo among locals. Locals had also come to expect that the main conflicts for which they would need to brace themselves the most were the potential outbreak of conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, power struggles between the Ottoman state and local *beys* and/or *valis*, intertribal rivalries, and power struggles between family members. Prior to the nineteenth century, locals in the region did not generally fear the outbreak of conflict along religious or ethnic lines. This was arguably the case in many regions of Eastern Anatolia throughout much of the period before 1878, although tensions along religious and ethnic lines did appear to increase after Russia's

invasion of Eastern Anatolia in the 1828-1829 war with the Ottoman Empire.

While many groups maintained distinctions along religious and ethnic lines, these distinctions were not always in and of themselves significant sources of tensions.

Religious distinctions, inasmuch as they pertained to Muslims distinguishing themselves from Christians and vice versa, cannot be said to be a major driver of conflict throughout much of Ottoman period. For centuries, Christians of various denomination, Muslims (including Alevis, Shi'ites, and Sunnis), and Yezidis had generally accepted each other's existence, even if there was mild tension among them. What kept them from trying to annihilate each other or forcibly convert each other was a prevalent status quo among them. Muslims saw themselves as entitled to positions of political and military power, but they tolerated Christians working as financiers, traders, merchants, artisans, agriculturalists, and physicians. In a select few locations, Muslims even tolerated Christians as potentates and magnates. However, Christians did not generally dare seek political and military positions within the Ottoman state in Eastern Anatolia and accepted Ottoman and Kurdish treatment of them as a different class that was unequal with the Muslims, but enjoyed a select number of privileges nonetheless. Few Christians in Eastern Anatolia fostered hopes of achieving autonomy, independence, and power. The Muslims, in turn, were fully confident that the Christians posed little if any threat to their dominance of the region. While the perpetual conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Iran did create a Sunni-Shi'i divide, which affected politics in southern Iraq, few Shi'is inhabited Eastern Anatolia (since they were probably driven out in an earlier period, or had masked their identities as Shi'is). In spite of the fact that the Alevis, or Kizilbash Kurds, may have been influenced by Shi'ism, they did not regard themselves as Shi'is

and there is little evidence that the Alevis' distinction from Sunnism was a source of social tension.

Among Muslims, religious distinction tended to trump ethnic distinction. Kurds, Turks, Arabs, Azeris, and Persians tended to emphasize their religious identities before emphasizing their ethnic identities. Ethnic distinctions were arguably greater among the Christians of Eastern Anatolia. Assyrians distinguished themselves from Armenians in spite of the fact that many were of the same miaphysite Oriental Orthodox tradition that emerged as a result of a schism in the aftermath of the ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451. The Assyrian and Armenian languages had a more holy status in their respective churches than did the Turkish, Kurdish, and Persian languages in Islam. Islam did not function as a channel for the expression of ethnic identity, but Christianity did to a much greater extent. Nonetheless, whatever ethnic tensions existed among Greeks, Armenians, and Assyrians in earlier periods were greatly mollified with the advent of the Ottoman conquest.

The confessional system that the Ottoman state implemented in Eastern Anatolia for the Armenian community was designed to accommodate ethnic diversity. It was the most practical solution for the Ottoman Turks to maintain control over a large multiethnic domain. This system benefitted enough Armenian elites to keep them favoring the Ottomans over separatist elements. It was not only the Ottoman administrators who fought off calls for Armenian liberation from the Ottoman Empire, but the Armenian elites themselves. Nonetheless, the Ottoman-backed Armenian elites sought to protect ethnic distinction and prevent assimilation. Yet they did make sure to nip all currents of ethnic-based separatism in the bud. They promoted a sense of Armenianness that was to

exist within the Ottoman system and alongside the interests of the Gregorian Armenian church.

Armenians in Eastern Anatolia were largely under the control of the Ottoman-backed Armenian elites. Any assertion of ethnic dominance against non-Armenian groups, as little as it was, was stalled. In most cases, whatever ethnic consciousness Armenians in Eastern Anatolia had was not separatist. They were used to foreign domination and while many may have been acquainted with dominant Armenian groups of the past, they were a distant memory, if not even a distant abstraction of sorts. It should be noted that some groups in Eastern Anatolia assimilated ethnically. Armenians and Kurds in some areas would learn each other's languages (most often, Armenians learned Kurdish and/or Turkish) and sought a means of communication with each other.<sup>1</sup>

Thoughts of full liberation from state control do not appear to have crossed the minds of Assyrian groups. They were small and isolated and had managed to acquire a significant degree of autonomy in certain pockets. Assyrianness was promoted as an ethnic identity that would coexist with the more populous non-Assyrian identities around them.

Kurds promoted ethnic distinction but were tolerant of ethnic diversity. Eastern Anatolia had long been an area on the frontier and a place of refuge for ethnically distinct minorities from state control. Assertions of Kurdish dominance appear to have been longstanding given the fact that the Ottomans had long referred to the region as Kurdistan

---

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Armenian had a certain degree of influence on the Turkish and Kurdish languages. Dankoff shows this in compilation of Armenian loanwords in Turkish. See Robert Dankoff, *Armenian Loanwords in Turkish* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995).

in recognition the Kurds' ethnic distinction. The Ottoman campaign against Kurdish elites in Eastern Anatolia during the 1830s and 1840s appeared to have deepened a rift along ethnic lines, even if the Kurds did not seem to voice their sense of Kurdishness in nationalist separatist terms until after WWI. Most Kurds were Muslims, and as was the case with other Muslims, one's religious identity took primacy over one's ethnic identity. Kurds were generally cautious to emphasize ethnic divisions against fellow Muslims.

Ethnic and religious tension in the region appeared to increase as a result of the increased intervention of first the Ottoman state, and later the foreign powers. The organic distinction was not enough on its own to be an escalating factor in tension, there had to be an outside catalyst. The main driver of this tension was the Ottoman administrations' centralization effort, which occurred throughout the entire period covered in this study. The fact that all three of the Ottomans' major garrison cities, Erzurum, Diyarbakır, and Van, fell out from under direct Ottoman control between 1800 and 1809 is indicative of how widespread opposition was to Sultan Selim III's reform efforts. When the Ottomans managed to win back control of their major garrison cities in 1819, war with Persia and Russia created another set of tensions that the Ottomans would struggle to contain. War with Iran pushed the Ottomans into greater conflict with seminomadic groups near the border. In an effort to turn Ottoman subjects against the sultan, Russia emboldened Kurds and Armenians, but mainly the latter, against the Ottoman state. Russia's attempt to mobilize Christians for the sake of conquest fueled Muslim suspicion against many Armenians. However, whatever social divisions emerged along religious lines appeared to be largely local. The Ottoman state bade Armenians to stay in the Empire and Christian and Muslim communities away from the



war zone appeared to be at greater peace. Nonetheless, Russian efforts to capture Eastern Anatolia throughout the 1800s would undoubtedly contribute to the spread of religious polarization.

The Ottomans' scramble to centralize control in the 1830s, driven largely over worries of Egypt's invasion of Syria spreading into northern Iraq and southeastern Anatolia, was rash, harsh, and unfairly targeted Kurdish groups. The campaign planted the seed of ethnic conflict between Turkish administrators and Kurds, particularly in the area south of Lake Van. Although the Ottomans pursued a modestly successful calculative centralization effort against rebel Kurdish groups during the 1840s, they were arguably never able to mend the divisions that their earlier more brutal effort had created. Furthermore, the Ottomans demolished the traditional structure that had held Kurdish society together without replacing it with an effective order. Strained by multiple internal pressures from Muslim groups throughout the empire and Christian separatist groups in the Balkans, the Ottomans shied away from investing the resources needed to establish order in Eastern Anatolia and allowed a virtual state of anarchy to prevail there between 1856 and 1878.

Socioeconomic divisions became another source of significant tension until the mid-nineteenth century. The life of the peasantry may have been quite harsh; however, they did not know much different and lacked the political consciousness and resource capabilities to launch any form of effective resistance against their overlords. Education played a significant role in turning social divisions into tension. Yet as Western missionaries and different Armenian churches began expanding education throughout Eastern Anatolia, increasing numbers of the Armenian peasantry became aware of and

resentful towards their lowly socioeconomic state in relation to dominant groups.

European efforts to push for Muslim-Christian equality throughout the Ottoman Empire aggravated the situation. These efforts heightened expectations of Armenian elements, who were caught in the power struggles between local Muslim groups in Eastern Anatolia, for change and reform. European rhetoric turned the Kurds and Circassians into hostile enemies of the Armenians and Armenian activists adopted their vocabulary in order to advance their causes. Kurdish groups, lacking any sort of representation at the state or international level, were forced to accept a negative international label and to be viewed as irrational marauders. The Ottomans were forced into a position of appearing hapless and incapable of maintaining order in the international community.

It was the inability of the Ottoman state and local communities to lessen the tensions of earlier periods that created an environment in which new circumstances would spawn new tensions. As long as old tensions were not mitigated, actors experiencing the tensions kept trying to redefine the source of their tensions. Unable to express the complexity of tensions, locals often turned to simplistic views to describe tensions, which views often originated from outsiders who were unacquainted with the depth of social interaction in the region. What had been imagined as a longstanding religious and ethnic tension and conflict in the region by outsiders gradually became adopted by locals who sought easy answers to complex issues. As more and more actors internalized conflict along religious and ethnic lines, it became more difficult to detach them from it.

## APPENDIX



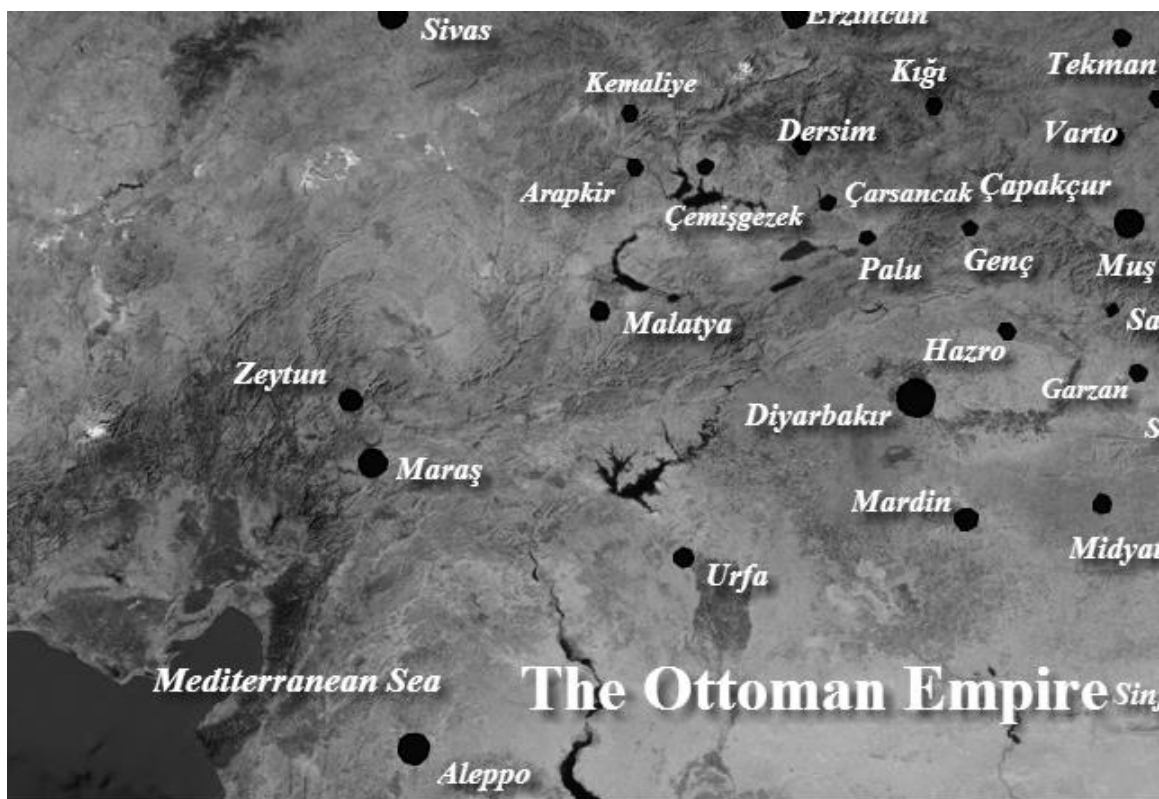
Map 1: Location of Eastern Anatolia on the Globe



Map 2: Lake Van and Iran border (borders circa 1830)



Map 3: Area North of Lake Van and Erzurum (international borders circa 1830)



Map 4: Diyarbakır, Dersim, Cilicia, Sivas



Map 5: Erzurum, Muş, and Dersim regions

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Archives and Archival Collections

*Başbakanlık Archives, The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office, Istanbul*  
(BBA)

Ali Emiri Mahmud I (AE.SMHD.I)  
Bab-1 Asafi Divan-1 Hümayun Kalemi (A.DVN)  
Bab-1 Asafi Mektubi Kalemi (A.MKT)  
Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS)  
Cevdet Dahiliye (C.DH)  
Cevdet Hariciye (C.HR)  
Cevdet Maliye (C.ML)  
Cevdet Zaptiye (C.ZB)  
Düvel-i Ecnebi Defteri (A.DVNS.DVE.D)  
Hariciye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi Evrakı (HR.MKT)  
Hariciye Nezareti Siyasi (HR.SYS)  
Hariciye Nezareti Tercüme Odası Evrakı (HR.TO)  
Hatt-ı Hümayûn Tasnifi (HAT)  
İbnülemin Hariciye (İE.HR)  
İrade Dahiliye (İ.DH)  
İrade Hariciye (İ.HR)  
İrade Meclis-i Mahsus (İ.MMS)  
İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ (İ.MVL)  
İrade Şura-yı Devlet (İ.ŞD)  
Maarif Evrakı Dosya Usulü Envanteri (MF)  
Meclis-i Vâlâ (MV)  
Meclis-i Vâlâ Evrakı (MVL)  
Mesail-i Mühimme İradeleri (İ.MSM)  
Sadaret Amedi Kalemi Evrakı (A.AMD)  
Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi Meclis-i Vala Evrakı (A.MKT.MVL)  
Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi Nezaret ve Deva'ir Evrakı (A.MKT.NZD)  
Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi Umum Vilayat Evrakı (A.MKT.UM)  
Sadaret Mektubi Mühimme Kalemi Evrakı (A.MKT.MHM)  
Yabancı Arşiv Gürcistan Arşivindeki Türkiye ile ilgili Belgeler (YB)  
Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Dahiliye Nezareti Maruzatı (Y.PRK.DH)  
Yıldız Sadrazam Kamil Paşa Evrakı (Y.EE.KP)



*Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons*

*Akty Sobranniye Kavkaskoy Arxeologicheskoy Komissiei* [Documents Collected by the Caucasian Archeological Commission]. Tiflis: Tipografiia Kantseliarii Glavnonachal'stvushchevo Grazhdanskoii Chast'iu na Kavkaze, 1866-1904.

Averyanov, Pyotr Ivanovich. *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii s Persyei i Turtsiyei v Techenie XIX Stoletiya* [The Kurds in the Wars of Russia with Persia and Turkey During the Nineteenth Century], 2 vols. Tiflis: Izd. Otdela Generalnovo Shtaba pri Shtabe Kavkazskovo Voennovo Okruga, 1900.

Bournoutian, George A., ed., *Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia, 1797-1889: A Documentary Record*. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1980.

Helmut von Moltke, *Türkiye'deki Durum ve Olaylar Üzerine Mektuplar (1835-1839)* [Letters on the Events and Situation in Turkey], translated by Hayrullah Örs. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1960.

Simeon, Catholicos of Armenia; Ghukas, Karnets'i Catholicos; Daniel, Surmaretsi Catholicos of Armenia; Dawit, Enegettsi Catholicos of Armenia; Hovsep Arghuteants, Catholicos of Armenia; Manuel, Kiwmiwshkhanetsi; Giut Aghaneants, eds. *Divan Hayots Patmutyan* [Register of Armenian History], 13 vols. Tiflis: Tparan M. Sharadze, 1899-1915.

Şimşir, Bilal, ed. *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*. 4 vols. Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1982.

Accounts by Contemporary Observers

Aghassi, *Zeïtoun Depuis les Origines Jusqu'à l'Insurrection de 1895* [Zeitoun from its Beginnings until the Uprising of 1895], translated by Archag Tchobanian. Paris: Mercure de France, 1897.

Antranig, Mgrdich. *Dersim: Janabarhutyun yev Deghakrutyun* [Dersim: Journey and Geography] Tiflis: Martiroseants, 1900.

Aramian, J. *Zeytuntsik yev Lusavorchagan Hayk*. Constantinople: Dabakrutiun Aramian, 1867.

*Ardzvi Vaspurakan*

Armenian National Assembly, *Rapports sur l'Oppression des Arméniens en Arménie et dans les Autres Provinces de la Turquie* [Accounts of the Oppression of Armenians in Armenia and in Other Provinces of Turkey. London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1877.

Badger, George Percy. *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*. 2 vols. London: J. Masters, 1852.

Brant, James. "Notes of Journey Through a Part of Kurdistan, in the Summer of 1838," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 10 (1841): 341-433.

Buckingham, James Silk. *Travels in Mesopotamia*, 2 vols. London: Henry Colburn, New Burlington Street, 1827.

Burnaby, Frederick Gustavus. *On Horseback Through Asia Minor*. 2 vols. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1877.

Cevdet Paşa, Ahmet. *Tarih-i Cevdet*. 12 vols. Istanbul: Matbaa-yı Amire, 1854.

Creagh, James. *Armenians, Koords, and Turks*. London: S. Tinsley & Co., 1880.

Curzon, Robert. *A Year at Erzerum, and on the Frontiers of Russia, Turkey, and Persia*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1854.

Dadian, Migirdich. "La Société Arménienne Contemporaine: Les Arméniens de l'Empire Ottoman." *La Revue des Deux Mondes* (June 1867): 803-827.

*Daily News Correspondence of the War Between Russia and Turkey*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1878.

Devgants, Yeremia. *Chanaparhordutyun Bardzr Hayk yev Vaspurakanin 1872-1873 tt.* [Journey to Upper Armenia and Van 1872-1873]. Yerevan: Hayastani GA Hratarakchutyun, 1991.

Dikranian, Migidich. *Hayeli Gortsots yev Ashkhatutyants* [Looking Glass of Cases and Works]. Istanbul: Tparani Tivitchean Tadeosi, 1864.

Duncan, Charles. *Campaign with the Turks*. 2 vols. London: Smith, Elder, 1855.

Emin, Joseph. *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin*. London, 1792.

*Evangelical Christendom: A Monthly Chronicle of the Churches*

Fraser, James Baillie. *Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan in the Years 1821 and 1822*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825.

Grant, Asahel. *The Nestorians, or, The Lost Tribes*. New York; London: John Murray, 1841.

*Hambavaber Rusiyo*

- Hovhannesiants, Asdvadzadur. *Zhamanagakragan Badmutyun Surp Yerusaghemi* [Chronological History of Holy Jerusalem]. Jerusalem: I Tparani Arakelakan Atoroy Srbots Hakovbeants, 1890.
- Injjian, Ghugas. *Ashkharhakrutyun Chorits Masants Ashkharhi* [Geography of the Four Corners of the World]. Vol. 1. Venice: St. Lazarus, 1804.
- Jaba, M. Alexandre, ed. *Recueil de Notices et Récits Kourdes Servant à la Connaissance de la Langue, de la Littérature et des Tribus du Kourdistan* [Collection of Records and Kurdish Stories Serving to the Knowledge of Language, Literature, and Tribes of Kurdistan]. St. Petersburg: Commissionnaires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1860.
- Khrimian, Migirdich. "Vankuyzh." In *Amboghjakan Yerker* [Anthology of Works], 253-258. New York: Hratarakchutyun Hay Krtakan Himnarkutean, 1929.
- Klapka, György. *The War in the East: From the Year 1853 Till July 1855*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1855.
- Krunk Hayots Ashkharhin*
- Krusinski, Judasz Tadeusz. *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 2. 1740. Reprint, New York: ARNO Press, 1973.
- Lake, Henry Atwell, William Fenwick Williams, Christopher Charles Teesdale, and H.L. Thompson, *Kars and Our Captivity in Russia: With Letters from Sir W.F. Williams, Major Teesdale, and the Late Captain Thompson*. London: R. Bentley, 1856.
- Lake, Henry Atwell. *Narrative of the Defence of Kars, Historical and Military*. London: R. Bentley, 1857.
- Layard, Austen Henry. *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*. 2 vols. London: Murray, 1853.
- Likhutin, Mikhail Dorimedontovich. *Russkie v Aziatskoi Turtsii v 1854 i 1855 Godakh* [Russians in Asian Turkey 1854-1855]. St. Petersburg, 1863.
- Lutfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lutfi* [Lutfi's History]. 8 vols. Istanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1886.
- Macfie, A.L. "Two Letters from Erzurum," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 4 (October, 1986): 571-575.
- Marsh, Dwight W. *The Tennessean in Persia and Koordistan*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1869.

Millingen, Frederick. *La Turquie sous le Règne d'Abdul-Aziz, 1862-1867*. Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1868.

*Missionary Herald*

Monteith, William. *Kars and Erzeroum*. London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1856.

Neuman, Karl Friedrich. *Geschichte der Übersiedlung von vierzig tausend Armeniern, welche im Jahre 1828 aus der Persischen Provinz Aderbaidtschan nach Rußland auswanderlen* [History of the Relocation of Forty Thousand Armenians, who in 1828 Emigrated from the Persian Province Azerbaijan to Russia]. Leipzig: Weidman'sche Buchhandlung, 1834.

Nolan, Edward Henry, ed., *The History of the War Against Russia*. London: Virtue, 1856.

Norman, Charles Boswell. *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*. London, Paris, New York: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1878.

Papazian, Stepan Boghos. *Gensakrutyun Harutyun Bezjian: Azgayin Anzukagan Parerari* [Biography of Harutyun Bezjian: A Unique National Benefactor]. Istanbul: Dbaran Hovhannes Myuhendisian, 1864.

Perkins, Justin. *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia Among the Nestorian Christians: With Notices of the Muhammedans*. New York: Allen, Morrill & Wardwell, 1843.

Raffi. *Yerkeri Zhoghovadsu* [Anthology of Works]. 11 vols. Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1958.

Rassam, Hormuzd, and Robert William Rogers. *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod*. Cincinnati: Curts and Jennings, 1897.

Ross, Henry. *Letters from the East*, edited by Janet Ross. London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1902.

Sandwith, Humphrey. "How the Turks Rule Armenia," *The Nineteenth Century, A Monthly Review* 3 (January-June 1878): 314-329.

Sandwith, Humphry. *A Narrative of the Siege of Kars and of the Six Months' Resistance*. London: J. Murray, 1856.

Sarukhan, Arakel Zatiki. *Haykakan Khendirn ev Azgayin Sahmanadrutiune Turkiayum (1860-1910)* [The Armenian Question and the National Constitution (1860-1910)]. Tiflis: Ėlektrasharzh Tparan Epokha, 1912.

Shiel, Justin. "Notes on a Journey from Tabriz, Through Kurdistan, via Van, Bitlis, Se'ert and Erbil, to Suleimaniyeh, in July and August, 1836." *Journal of the Royal*

*Geographical Society of London* 8 (1838): 54-101.

Smith, Eli, and H.G.O. Dwight. *Researches of Rev. E. Smith and the Rev. H.G.O. Dwight in Armenia*, 2 vols. Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1833.

Smith, Eli, H.G.O. Wight, and Josiah Conder, *Missionary Researches in Armenia Including a Journey Through Asia Minor, and into Georgia and Persia, with a Visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Oormiah and Salmas*. London: G. Wightman, 1834.

Southgate, Horatio. *Narrative of a Tour Through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia, and Mesopotamia*. Vol. 2. London: Tilt and Bogue, 1840.

Southgate, Horatio. *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian [Jacobite] Church of Mesopotamia: With Statements and Reflections upon the Present State of Christianity in Turkey*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1844.

Ubicini, Jean Henri Abdolonyme, and Abel Pavet de Courteille. *État Présent de l'Empire Ottoman* [The Present State of the Ottoman Empire]. Paris: J. Dumaine, 1876.

Walpole, Frederick. *The Ansayrii (or Assassins) with Travels in the Further East Including a Visit to Nineveh*. 2 vols. London: Richard Bentley Press, 1851.

Yeramian, Hampartsum. *Hushartsan Van-Vasburagani* [Memoirs of Van-Vaspurakan]. Vol. 1. Alexandria: Dbakrutyun Aram Kasabian, 1929.

### Secondary Material

Aboona, Hirmis. *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire*. Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2008.

Abu-Manneh, Butrus. "The Sultan and the Bureaucracy: The Anti-Tanzimat Concepts of Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Paşa." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 3 (August 1990): 257-274.

Ágoston, Gábor. "Iran (Islamic Republic of Iran, Persia)." In *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Alan Masters, 278-282. New York: Facts on File, 2009.

Aivazian, Armen. *The Armenian Rebellion of the 1720s and the Threat of Genocidal Reprisal*. Yerevan: Center for Policy Analysis, American University of Armenia, 1997.

- Akçam, Taner. *Siyasi Kültürümüzde Zulüm ve İşkence* [Oppression and Torture in Our Political Culture]. Istanbul: İletişim Publications, 1992.
- Akyıldız, Ali. *Osmanlı Finans Sisteminde Dönüm Noktası: Kağıt Parası ve Sosyoekonomik Etkileri* [The Turning Point in Ottoman Finance: Paper Money and its Socioeconomic Effects]. Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1996.
- al-Gurani, Ali Sido. *Min 'Amman ila al-'Amadiya* [From Amman to Amadiya]. Cairo: al-Sa'ada Press, 1939.
- Allen, William Edward David, and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border, 1828-1921*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953.
- Arafa, Hassan. *The Kurds: A Historical and Political Study*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.
- Armenian Apostolic Church of America. *Hayrig: A Celebration of His Life and Vision on the Eightieth Anniversary of His Death, 1907-1987*. New York: Prelacy of the Armenian Church, 1987.
- Arpee, Leon. *The Armenian Awakening: A History of the Armenian Church 1820-1860*. New York: The Armenian Missionary Association of America, 1946.
- Artinian, Vartan. *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu 1839-1863* [The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1836: A Study of its Historical Development], translated by Zülal Kılıç. Istanbul: Aras, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1863: A Study of its Historical Development*. Istanbul: Aras, 1988.
- Aslanian, Sebouh David. *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.
- Astourian, Stephan. "Genocidal Process: Reflections on the Armeno-Turkish Polarization." In *The Armenian Genocide: History Politics, Ethics*, edited by Richard G. Hovannisian, 53-79. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Testing world-system theory, Cilicia (1830's-1890's): Armenian-Turkish Polarization and the Ideology of Modern Ottoman Historiography." PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1996.
- Ateş, Abdurrahman. "Avşarlı Nadir Şah ve Döneminde Osmanlı-İran Mücadeleleri" [Nader Shah Afshari and the Ottoman-Iranian Conflicts during his Period]. PhD diss., Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta, 2001.

- Ateş, Sabri. "Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881." PhD diss., New York University, 2006.
- Atkin, Muriel. *Russia and Iran 1780-1828*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980.
- Averyanov, Pyotr Ivanovich. *Kurdy v Voinakh Rossii s Persyei i Turtsiyei v Techenie XIX Stoletiya* [The Kurds in the Wars of Russia with Persia and Turkey During the Nineteenth Century], 2 vols. Tiflis: Izd. Otdela Generalnovo Shtaba pri Shtabe Kavkazskovo Voennovo Okruga, 1900.
- Aydın, Suavi, and Jelle Verheij. "Confusion in the Cauldron: Some Notes on Ethno-Religious Groups, Local Powers, and the Ottoman State in Diyarbekir Province, 1800-1870." *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870-1915*, edited by Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij, 15-54. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012.
- Aziz Tekdemir, "XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Çeyreğinde Osmanlı-İran İhtilafları ve 1821-1823 Savaşı" [Ottoman-Iranian Differences in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century and the 1821-1823 War]. *Dergi Karadeniz* 4 (January 2009): 77-95.
- Badalyan, Khachatur, "Vani Nahange 1840-akan 1914 tt." [The Province of Van from 1840 to 1914], *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 3 (1986): 13-27.
- Badem, Candan. *The Ottoman Crimean War, 1853-1856*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010.
- Baer, Gabriel. "The Evolution of Private Landownership in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent." In *The Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914*, edited by Charles Issawi, 79-90. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966.
- Barkey, Karen. *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Barsoumian, Hagop. "The Armenian Amira Class of Istanbul." PhD diss., Columbia University, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Dual Role of the Armenian *Amira* Class Within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian *Millet* (1750-1850)." In *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, 171-184. Vol. 1. New York; London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982.
- Bay, Abdullah. "Trabzon Eyaletinde Müttegallibe Hareketleri ve Âyanlık (1750-1850) [Notables and Warlord Movements in the Trabzon Eyalet (1750-1850)]. PhD diss., Atatürk Üniversitesi, Erzurum, 2007.
- Bayburdian, Vahan A. *Hay Krdakan Haraberutyunnere Osmanyanyan Kaysrutyunum: XIX*

*Darum yev XX Dari Skzpin* [Kurdish Armenian Relations in the Ottoman Empire: In the Nineteenth Century and the Beginning of the Twentieth]. Yerevan: Hayastan, 1989.

Beydilli, Kemal. "1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşında Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler" [Armenians Moved from Eastern Anatolia to Russia During the 1828-1829 Russo-Ottoman War]. *Türk Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* 17, no. 1 (1988): 365-434.

van den Boogert, Maurits. "Millet: Past and Present," in *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, edited by Anh Nga Longva and Anne Sofie Roald, 27-46. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Bosworth, C.E. "Wān." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition.  
[http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam\\_COM-1336](http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-1336) (accessed October 28, 2013).

Bournoutian, George A. "The Ethnic Composition of the Socio-Economic Condition of Eastern Armenia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century." In *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change*, edited by Ronald Grigor Suny, 69-86. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Eastern Armenia from the Seventeenth Century to the Russian Annexation." in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, edited by Richard Hovannisian, 81-107. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Eastern Armenia in the Last Decades of Persian Rule 1807-1828: A Political and Socioeconomic Study of the Khanate of Erevan on the Eve of the Russian Conquest*. Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1982.

Bournoutian, George A., and Robert Hewsen. "Erevan." *Encyclopedia Iranica*.  
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/erevan-1>, accessed October 18, 2013.

Braude, Benjamin. "Foundation Myths of the Millet System." In *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, edited by Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, 75-83. Vol. 1. New York; London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982.

Buckland, Charles Edward, ed. *Dictionary of Indian Biography*. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1906.

Çadırcı, Musa. *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentlerinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapıları* [The Social and Economic Structure of Anatolian Cities During the Tanzimat Period]. Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1991.

Campbell, George John Douglas, Duke of Argyll. *Our Responsibilities for Turkey: Facts*



- and Memories for Forty Years*. London: John Murray, 1896.
- Celil, Celile. *Intifadat al-Akrad 'Am 1880* [Uprising of the Kurds 1880]. Moscow: Academy of Sciences in the Soviet Union, 1966.
- Chalabian, Antranig. *Armenia After the Coming of Islam*. Southfield, MI: A. Chalabian, 2002.
- Chevalier, Michel. *Les Montagnards Chrétiens du Hakkâri et du Kurdistan Septentrional* [The Mountain Christians of Hakkari and of Northern Kurdistan]. Paris: Université du Sorbonne, 1985.
- Cohen, Dov. "Culture, Social Organization, and Patterns of Violence." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75, no. 2 (August 1998): 408-419.
- Dadrian, Vahakn. "Factors of Anger and Aggression in Genocide." *Journal of Human Relations* 19, no. 3, (1971): 394-417.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*. New York; Oxford Berghahn Books, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of the Turko-Armenian Conflict*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1999.
- Dalyan, Murat Gökhan. "19. Yüzyıl'da Nesturiler (İdari Sosyal Yapı ve Siyasi İlişkileri) [Nestorians in the Nineteenth Century (Administrative Social Structure and Political Relations)]. PhD diss., Süleyman Demirel University, İsparta, 2009.
- Dames, M. Longworth. "Ghalzai." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed. (1913-1936). Edited by M. Th. Houtsma, T.W. Arnold, R. Basset, and R. Hartmann. [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-1/ghalzai-SIM\\_2441](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-1/ghalzai-SIM_2441) (accessed October 2, 2014).
- Dankoff, Robert, ed. *Evliya Çelebi in Bitlis*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Armenian Loanwords in Turkish*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995.
- Davey, Richard. *The Sultan and His Subjects*. London: Chapman Hall, 1897.
- Dávid, Géza. "Administration, Central." In *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Alan Masters, 10-13. New York: Facts on File, 2009.
- Davison, Roderic. *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- de Courtois, Sébastien, and Vincent Aurora, *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, the Last Arameans*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004.
- Diloyan, V.A., and V.H. Rshtuni, "Aravelyan Hayastane Kazmum" [Eastern Armenia in the Russian Structure]. In *Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmutyun*, edited by T.P. Aghayan. Yerevan: Yerevani Hamalsarani Hratarakchutyun, 1974.
- Doğan, Cabir. "II Mahmut Dönemi Osmanlı Merkezileşme Politikasının Doğu Vilayetlerinde Uygulanması" [The Application of the Ottoman Centralization Policy in the Eastern Vilayets during the Mahmut II Period]. *International Periodical for the Languages, Literature, and History of Turkish or Turkic* 6, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 505-521.
- Duguid, Stephen. "The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia." *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 2 (May 1973): 139-155.
- Eppel, Michael. "The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates: The Impact of Ottoman Reforms and International Relations on Kurdistan during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century." *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008): 237-258.
- Figes, Orlando. *The Crimean War: A History*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010.
- Findley, Carter. "Continuity, Innovation, Synthesis, and the State." In *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, edited by Kemal Karpaz, 29-46. Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2000.
- Frazee, Charles A. *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Freitag, Ulrike. *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the Homeland*. Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2003.
- Gammer, Moshe. *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan*. Portland: F. Cass, 1994.
- Gencer, Fatih. "Merkezileşme Politikaları Sürecinde Yurtluk-Ocaklık Sisteminin Değişimi" [Alteration of the Yurtluk-Ocaklık System in the Process of Centralization Policies]. *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 49 (2011): 75-96.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler Bağlamında Bedirhan Bey Olayı" [The Bedr Khan Bey Incident in the Context of the Administrative Centralization]. PhD diss., Ankara University, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Van Muhafızı Derviş Paşa İsyanı" [The Revolt of the Guardian of Van:

- Derviş Paşa]. *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 29, no. 47 (2010): 197-216.
- Ghazarian, Haik. *Arevmtahayeri Sotsyal Tntesakan yev Kaghakakan Katsutyune 1800-1870* [The Socioeconomic and Political Situation of the Western Armenians 1800-1870]. Yerevan: Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Akademiayi Hratarakchutyun, 1967.
- Gibb, Hamilton, and Harold Bowen. *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Muslim Culture in the Near East*. Vol 2. London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Göçek, Fatma Müge. "The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish, and Arab Nationalisms." In *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East*, edited by Fatma Müge Göçek, 15-84. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Gözel, Oya. "The Implementation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 in Eastern Anatolia." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, 2007.
- Grabill, Joseph. *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy 1810-1927*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971.
- Guest, John S. *Survival Among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis*. New York; London: Kegan Paul International, 1993.
- Günay, Nejla. *Maraş'ta Ermeniler ve Zeytun İsyanları* [The Armenians of Maraş and the Zeytun Rebellions]. Istanbul: IQ Kültür Yayıncılık Sanat, 2007.
- Hacikyan, Agop J., Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, and Nourhan Ouzounian. *The Heritage of Armenian Literature*. 3 vols. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005.
- Hagop Barsoumian, "The Eastern Question and the Tanzimat Era." In *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, edited by Richard Hovannisian, 175-201. Vol. 2. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Hakan, Sinan. *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler ve Kürt Direnişleri*. Istanbul: Doz Yayıncılık, 2007.
- Harris, David. *A Diplomatic History of the Balkan Crisis of 1875-1878: The First Year*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1936.
- Hayta, Necdet. *Tavsir-i Efkar Gazetesi (1862-1869)*. Ankara: TC Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002.
- Heper, Metin. "Center and Periphery in the Ottoman Empire, With Special Reference to

- the Nineteenth Century.” *International Political Science Review* 1, no. 1 (January 1980): 81-104
- Hewsen, Robert H. *Armenia: A Historical Atlas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “The Meliks of Eastern Armenia: A Preliminary Study,” *Révue des Études Arméniens*, 9 (1972): 286-329.
- Heyd, Uriel. “The Ottoman ‘Ulema and Westernization in the Time of Selim III and Mahmud II,” in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, edited by Albert Habib Hourani et al., 29-60. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Hocaoğlu, Mehmet. *Arşiv Vesikalarıyla Tarihte Ermeni Mezâlimi ve Ermeniler* [Armenians and Armenian Atrocities in History with Archival Documents]. Ankara: ER-TU Press, 1976.
- Hodgson, Marshall G.S. *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*. Vol. 5 of *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Hofmann, Tessa, and Gerayer Koutcharian, “The History of Armenian-Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire.” *Armenian Review* 39, no. 4-156 (Winter 1986): 1-45.
- Homes, Henry A. “The Sect of Yezidies of Mesopotamia,” *The American Biblical Repository* 7 (April 1842): 329-351.
- Hovannisian, Richard G. “The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1914.” In *The Armenian People From Ancient to Modern Times, Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, edited by Richard G. Hovannisian, 203-238. Vol. 2. New York: St Martin's Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Armenia on the Road to Independence*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976.
- Hrand D. Andreasyan, “Abaza Mehmet Paşa,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 17, no. 22 (March 1967): 131-142.
- Ibrahimbeyli, Hadji Murat. *Rossiya i Azerbaidjan v Pervoy Treti XIX Veka: Iz Voenno-Politicheskoy Istorii* [Russia and Azerbaijan in the First Third of the Nineteenth Century: Military and Political History]. Moscow: Nauka, Glavnaya Redaktsiya Vosmochnoy Literatury, 1969.
- İnbaşı, Mehmet. “Van Valileri (1755-1835)” [The Valis of Van (1755-1835)]. *A.Ü. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 29 (2006): 195-212.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "XVIII. Yüzyılda Bitlis Sancağı ve İdarecileri" [Bitlis Province and its Governors During the Eighteenth Century], *A.U. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 33 (2007): 243-261.
- Injikian, Ohannes Grigorievich. *Burjuazia Osmanskoy Imperii* [The Bourgeoisie of the Ottoman Empire]. Yerevan: Akademiya Nauk Armyanskoi SSR, 1977.
- Issawi, Charles. "The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade, 1830-1900: Rise and Decline of a Route." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 1970): 18-27.
- Jennings, Ronald C. "Urban Population in Anatolia in the Sixteenth Century: A Study of Kayseri, Karaman, Amasya, Trabzon, and Erzurum." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 1 (January, 1976): 21-57.
- Jorga, Nikolai. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi* [History of the Ottoman Empire], translated by Nilüfer Epçeli. Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2005.
- Joseph, John. *Muslim-Christian Relations and Inter-Christian Rivalries in the Middle East: The Case of the Jacobites in an Age of Transition*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Missions, Archaeologists, and Colonial Powers*. Boston: Brill, 2000.
- Jwaideh, Wadie. *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Its Origins and Development*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006.
- Kaiser, Hilmar. *Imperialism, Racism, and Development Theories: The Constructing of a Dominant Paradigm on Ottoman Armenians*. Ann Arbor, MI: Gomidas Institute, 1997.
- Karaman, Oktay. "Diyarbakır Valisi Hatunoğlu Kurt İsmail Hakkı Paşa'nın Diyarbakır'daki Aşiretleri İslah ve İskân Çalışması (1868-1875)" [Diyarbakır Vali Hatunoğlu Kurt İsmail Hakkı Paşa's Attempt to Reform and Settle the Tribes of Diyarbakır (1868-1875)], *International Journal of History* 4, no. 2 (April 2012): 227-249.
- Karaosmanoğlu, Ali L. "The Evolution of the National Security Culture and the Military in Turkey." *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (Fall, 2000): 199-216.
- Karpat, Kemal. "Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82- 1893." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 3 (October 1978): 237-274.
- Kasap, Murat. "Yusuf Ziya Paşa," *Gürcistan Dostluk Derneği*, first published September 24, 2009, <http://www.gdd.org.tr/tarihtendetay.asp?id=91> (accessed June 2, 2014).

- Kaya, Ali. *Başlangıcından Tarihimize Dersim Tarihi* [The History of Dersim from the Beginning to Our Day]. Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 1999.
- Khalfin, Naftula A. *Borba za Kurdistan: Kurdskiy Vopros v Mezhdunarodnykh Otnosheniakh XIX Vyeka* [The War for Kurdistan: The Kurdish Question in International Relations During the Nineteenth Century]. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Vostochny Literatury, 1963.
- Khanbaghi, Aptin. *The Fire, The Star, and The Cross: Minority Religions in Medieval and Early Modern Iran*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006.
- Kılıç, Orhan. "Ocaklık Sancakların Osmanlı Hukukunda ve İdari Tatbikattaki Yeri" [The Place of *Ocaklık Sancaks* in Ottoman Law and Administration]. *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 11, no. 1 (January 2001): 257-274.
- Kirakosian, Arman Dzhonovich. *British Diplomacy and the Armenian Question*. Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Insitute Books, 2003.
- Klein, Janet. *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Tribal Zone*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Kodaman, Bayram. "Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları (II. Abdülhamid ve Doğu Aşiretleri)" [The Hamidiye Light Cavalry (Abdülhamid II and the Eastern Tribes)]. *Tarih Dergisi* 32, no. 1 (March 1975): 427-480.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Abdülhamid Devri Eğitim Sistemi* [The Education System During the Abdülhamid Period]. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1988.
- Kouymjian, Dickran. "Armenia from the Fall of the Cilician Kingdom (1375) to the Forced Emigration under Shah Abbas (1604)" in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, edited by Richard Hovannisian, 1-50. Vol. 2. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Krikorian, Mesrob K. *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire 1860-1908*. London, Henley, and Boston: Routledge, 1977.
- Kuneralp, Sinan. *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricali (1839-1922): Prosopografik Rehber* [Ottoman Dignitaries During the Late Period (1839-1922): A Prosopographic Guide]. Istanbul: Isis, 2003.
- Kurt, Yılmaz. "XVI. Yüzyılda Adana Tarihi" [The History of Adana in the Sixteenth Century]. PhD. diss., Hacettepe University, Ankara 1992.
- Kymlicka, William. "Two Models of Pluralism and Tolerance." *Analyse & Kritik* 13 (1992): 33-56.

- Lewis, Bernard. *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Lewy, Guenter. *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005.
- Libaridian, Gerard. "The Ideology of the Armenian Liberation: The Development of Armenian Political Thought Before the Revolutionary Movement (1639-1885)." PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004.
- Longrigg, Stephen Helmsley. *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925.
- Maclean, Arthur John. *Grammar of the Dialects of Vernacular Syriac*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1895.
- Malmisanij. *Cizira Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhani Ailesi Derneği'nin Tutanakları* [The Bedr Khan Family of Cizre/Bohtan and Proceedings of Their Institution]. Istanbul: Berdan Matbaası, 2000.
- Masters, Bruce. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism*. New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Matveev, KP. *Asurlar, Modern Çağda Asur Ulusal Sorunu* [The Assyrians: The Assyrian National Question in the Modern Period], translated by Murat Kaya. Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996.
- McCarthy, Justin, and Carolyn McCarthy. *Turks and Armenians: A Manual on the Armenian Question*. Washington DC: Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 1989.
- McCarthy, Justin. *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821-1922*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995.
- Melson, Robert. "A Theoretical Inquiry into the Armenian Massacres of 1894-1896." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, no. 3 (July 1982): 451-509.
- Minorsky, V., and Sheila S. Blair, "Tabrīz." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd edition. [http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam\\_COM-1137](http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-1137), accessed October 28, 2013.
- Momen, Moojan. *An Introduction to Shi'ism: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

- Morgenthau, Henry. *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*. New York: Doubleday Page and Co., 1918.
- Nalbandian, Louise. *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties Through the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.
- Nazım Paşa, Hüseyin. *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi* [History of the Armenian Incidents]. Ankara: Osmanlı Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1998.
- Nersisian, M.G. *Hay Zhoghovrdi Azatagrakan Paykare Turkakan Brnapetutyun Dem: 1850-1890* [The Armenian Peoples' Struggle Against Turkish Aggression: 1850-1890]. Yerevan: HH GAA "Gitutyun" Hratarakchutyun, 2002.
- Öğün, Tuncay. *Doğu'nun Mîrlerine Son Veda: Cizreli İzzeddin Şîr Bey ve İsyanı*. Istanbul: Yeditepe, 2010.
- Ortaylı, İlber. *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahallî İdareleri, 1840-1880* [Local Ottoman Administration During the Tanzimat Period]. Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu Publishing House, 2000.
- Özcoşar, İbrahim. *Merkezleşme Sürecinde Bir Taşra Kenti Mardin (1800-1900)* [The Rural Town of Mardin During the Period of Centralization (1800-1900)]. Mardin: Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009.
- Özoğlu, Hakan. *Kurdish Notables in the Ottoman State*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.
- Palchean, Agheksander. *Kavazanakirk: Hachortutyun Vanaharts Ukhdis Surp Garabet Taronoy* [Chronology of Prelates: Consecution of the Holy Order of St. Garabet of Taron]. Jerusalem: Tparani Arak, Atorroy Surp Hagobyants, 1912.
- Pamuk, Şevket. "The Ottoman Empire in the 'Great Depression' of 1873-1896." *The Journal of Economic History* 44, no. 1 (March 1984), 107-118.
- Papadopoulos, Stephanos I. *Oi Epanastaseis tou 1854 kai 1878 sten Makdonia* [The Revolutions of 1854 and 1878 in Macedonia]. Thessaloniki: Makedonike Laike Bibliotheke, 1970.
- Petrov, Milen V. "Tanzimat for the Countryside: Midhat Pasa and the Vilayet of Danube, 1864-1868." PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006.
- Poghosian, H.M. *Sasuni Patmutyun* [History of Sasun]. Yerevan: Hayastan Hratarakchutyun, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Vaspurakani Patmutyunits (1850-1900)* [From the History of



- Vaspurakan/Van, 1850-1900] Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Zeytuni Patmutyune 1409-1921* [The History of Zeytun 1409-1921]. Yerevan: Hayastan Hratarakchutyun, 1969.
- Quataert, Donald. *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922*. New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Reid, James J. *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse, 1839-1878*. Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2000.
- Riedler, Florian. *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire: Conspiracies and Political Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Robarts, Andrew. "Treaty of Bucharest." In *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Bruce Masters and Gábor Ágoston, 94. New York, NY: Facts On File, 2009.
- Rozen, D. Georg. *Istoriya Turtsii ot Pobedy Reformy v 1826 Godu do Parizhskavo Traktata v 1856 Godu* [The History of Turkey from the Success of the Reform of 1826 to the Paris Treaty of 1856]. St. Petersburg, 1872.
- Russell, Frank. *Russian Wars with Turkey*. London: H.S. King & Co., 1877.
- Saab, Ann Potinger. *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria, and the Working Classes, 1856-1878*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Safrastian, Arshag, ed. *Turkagan Aghpyurnere Hayasdani: Hayeri yev Antrkovkasi Myus Zhoghovrtneri Masin* [Turkish Sources on Armenia: Concerning Armenians and Other Peoples of Transcaucasia]. Vol 1. Yerevan: Gitutyunneri Akademiayi Hratarakchutyun, 1961.
- Salzmann, Ariel. *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State*. Leiden: EJ Brill, 2004.
- Sanjian, Avedis K. *Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Sasuni, Garo. *Badmutyun Daroni Ashkharhi* [History of the Muş Region]. Beirut: Hradaragutyun Daron-Turuberani Hayrenaktsagan Myutyan Getronagan Varchutyun, 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Kurt Azkayin Sharzhumnere yev Hay-Krtagan Haraperutyunnere* [The Kurdish Nationalist Movements and Armenian-Kurdish Relations]. Beirut: Dbaran Hamazkayin, 1969.

- Saydam, Abdullah. "Trabzon'un İdarî Yapısı ve Yenileşme Zarureti (1793-1851) [The Administrative Structure of Trabzon and the Necessity of Modernization, 1793-1851]. *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 18 (2006): 285-317.
- Sevgen, Nazmi. *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri: Osmanlı Belgeleri ile Kürt Türkleri Tarihi* [Turkish Beyliks in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia: Kurdish and Turkish History with Ottoman Documents]. Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1982.
- Shahbazian, Hagop. *Kyurto-Hay Badmutyun* [Kurdish-Armenian History]. Istanbul: Dbaran Araks, 1911.
- Shaw, Stanford, and Ezel Kural Shaw. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Shaw, Stanford. "Iranian Relations with the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." *The Cambridge History of Iran: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, edited by Peter Avery, et al., 297-313. Vol. 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 4 (October 1975): 421-459.
- Shields, Sarah. *Mosul Before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.
- Simonian, Hovann H. "Hemshin from Islamicization to the End of the Nineteenth Century," in *Hemshin: History, Society, and Identity in the Highlands of Northeast Turkey*, edited by Hovann H. Simonian, 52-99. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Somel, Selçuk Akşin. *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*. Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2001.
- Sonyel, Salahi Ramsdan. *Ottoman Armenians: Victims of Great Power Diplomacy*. London: K. Rustem & Brother, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Assyrians of Turkey: Victims of Major Power Policy*. Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 2001.
- Sultan Abdülhamid II, interview by Alexander Watkins Terrell, March 19, 1897, "An Interview with Sultan Abdul Hamid." *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 55, no. 1 (November 1897): 133-138.

- Temperley, H.W.V. "Disraeli and Cyprus." *The English Historical Review* 46, no. 182 (April 1931): 274-279.
- Tilly, Charles. *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984.
- Tute, R.C. *The Ottoman Land Laws: With a Commentary on the Ottoman Land Code of 7<sup>th</sup> Ramadan 1274*. Jerusalem: Greek Conv. Press, 1927.
- Tyutyunjian, Levon. *Harutyun Amira Bezjian yev Ir Zhamanagnere: Anor Dznenian 200-Amyagin Artin* [Harutyun Amira Bezjian and His Times: On the Anniversary of His 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday]. Cairo: Vosgedar, 1971.
- Ufford, Letitia Wheeler. *The Pasha: How Mehemet Ali Defied the West, 1839-1841*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007.
- Ünal, Mehmet Ali. "XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllarda Diyarbakir Eyaletine Tabi Sancakların İdari Statüleri" [The Administrative Statutes of the Sancaks in the Diyarbakir Eyalet During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries]. *Ziya Gökalp Dergisi* 44 (December 1986): 31-40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "XVI. Yüzyılda Palu Hükümeti" [The Palu Hükümet During the Sixteenth Century]. *Ondukuzmayıs Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 7 (December 1992): 241-265.
- Ünlü, Nihan. *The Legal Regime of the Turkish Straits*. The Hague; New York: Nijhoff Publishers, 2002.
- Uras, Esat. *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi* [The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question]. Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question*, translated by Tülây Duran. Ankara: Documentary Publications, 1988.
- van Bruinessen, Martin, and Iendrik Boeschoten, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbakir: The Relevant Section of the Seyahatname*. Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Agha, Shaykh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*. London; New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992.
- Varandian, Mikayel. *Haykakan Sharzhman Nakhapatmutyun* [The Early History of the Armenian Movement]. Vol 1. Geneva: Hratarakrutyun HHD, 1912.
- Verheij, Jelle. "Les Frères de Terre et d'Eau: Sur le Rôle des Kurdes dans les Massacres Arméniens de 1894-1896" [Brothers of Earth and Water: On the Role of the Kurds in the Armenian Massacres of 1894-1896]. *Les Annales de l'Autre Islam* 5

- (1998): 225-276.
- Walker, Christopher. *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980.
- Warriner, Doreen. *Land and Poverty in the Middle East*. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1948.
- Williamson, Graham. "The Turko-Persian War 1821-1823: Winning the War but Losing the Peace." In *War and Peace in Qajar Persia: Implications Past and Present*, edited by Roxane Farmanfarmaian, 88-109. London; New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Yapp, Malcom E. *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923*. London and New York: Longman, 1987.
- Yavuz, Nuri. "Fırka-ı Islahiye Ordusunun Özellikleri ve Faaliyetleri" [The Features and Activities of the Fırka-ı Islahiye (The Division of Renovation)]. *Akademik Bakış* 5, no. 10 (Summer 2012): 113-27.
- Yazbak, Mahmoud. *Haifa in the Late Ottoman Period, 1864-1914: A Muslim Town in Transition*. Boston; Leiden: Brill, 1998.
- Yılmazçelik, İbrahim. "Osmanlı Hakimiyeti Süresince Diyarbakır Eyaleti Valileri (1516-1838)" [The Valis of the Province of Diyarbakır during Ottoman Governance (1516-1838)]. *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 10, no. 1 (2000): 233-287.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Dersim Sancağı: İdarî, İktisadî, ve Sosyal Hayat* [The Dersim Sancak During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: Administrative, Economic, and Social Life]. Elazığ: Çağ Ofset Matbaacılık, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır: (1790-1840): (Fızıkî, İdarî ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı)* [Diyarbakır during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century (1790-1840)(Physical, Administrative, and Socioeconomic Structure)]. Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu Basımevi, 1995.
- Yücel, Yaşar. "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Desantralizasyona (Adem-i Merkeziyet) Dair Gözlemler" [Observations on Decentralization in the Ottoman Empire]. *Belleten* 28, no. 152 (1974): 657-708.
- Zaki, Muhammad Amin. *Khulasat Tarikh al-Kurd wa Kurdistan min Aqdam al-'Usur Hatta al-'An* [A Summary of the History of the Kurds and Kurdistan from the Most Ancient Times until the Present], translated by Muhammad Ali Awni. Cairo: al-Sa'ada Press, 1939.
- Zens, Robert. "Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa and the Paşalık of Belgrade, 1791-1807."

*International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8, 1-2 (Spring 2002): 89-104.

Zeytuntsi, *Zeytuni Antsyalen yev Nergayen* [Zeytun: Past and Present]. Vienna:  
Mkhitaryan Tparan, 1900.